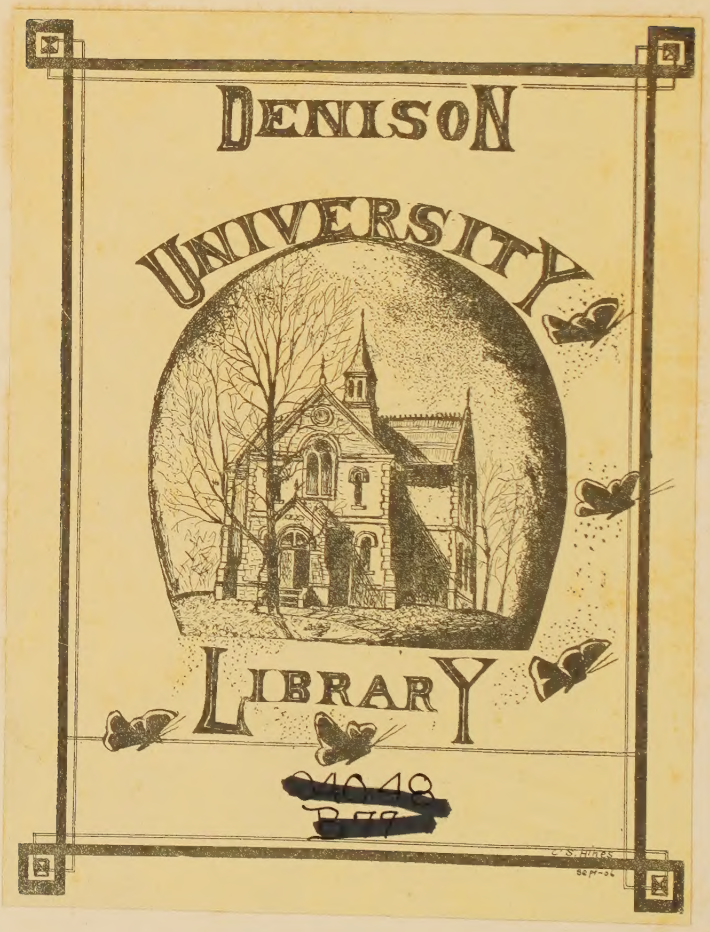
TO VERDUN FROM THE SOMME

HARRY E. BRITTAIN



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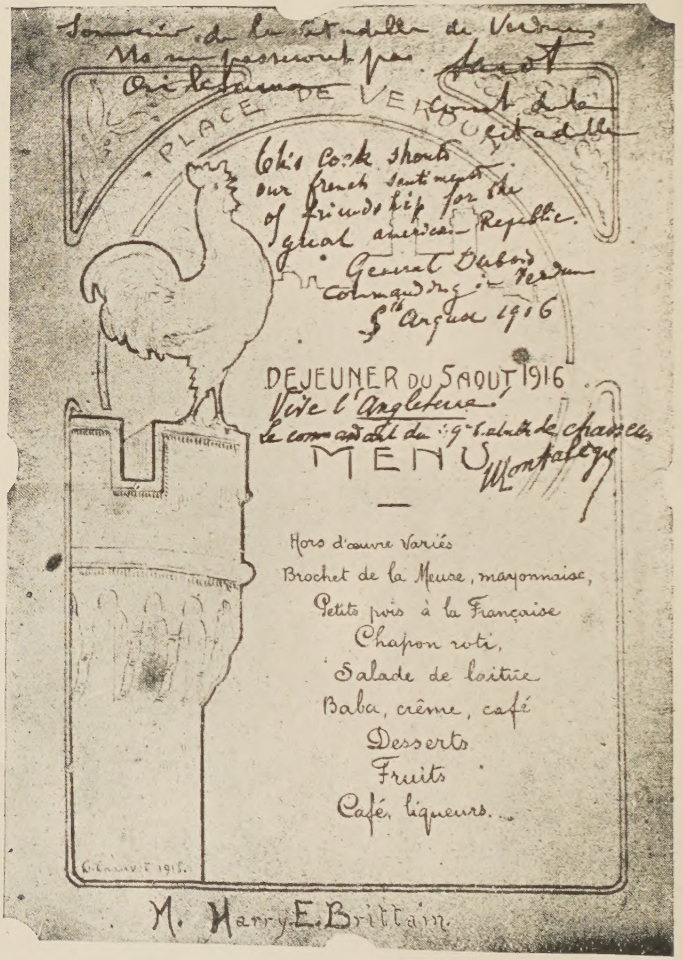

MENU OF LUNCHEON GIVEN BY GENERAL DUBOIS IN THE CITADEL OF VERDUN

TO VERDUN FROM THE SOMME

AN ANGLO AMERICAN GLIMPSE OF THE GREAT ADVANCE

BY

HARRY E. BRITTAIN

with an introduction by

JAMES M. BECK

THIRD EDITION

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TO

THE HON. JAMES M. BECK,

WELCOME PILGRIM FROM NEW YORK, ONE OF AMERICA'S GREATEST LAWYERS, AND A STERLING CHAMPION OF THE CAUSE OF FREEDOM,

THIS BRIEF ACCOUNT OF EVER MEMORABLE DAYS TOGETHER

IS DEDICATED

BY HIS SINCERE FRIEND AND FELLOW PILGRIM,

THE AUTHOR.

FOREWORD

IF "good wine needs no bush" and a "good play needs no epilogue," then a good book needs no foreword. This restraining reflection suggests itself to any one who is asked to write a foreword to another man's book.

Nevertheless it gives me great pleasure to comply with the publisher's request, as it gives me an opportunity to express my deep appreciation of the many courtesies which I received in England and France on the occasion of my "little journey to Mars," which Mr. Brittain's book records, and especially to express the obligation under which I am to him for the admirable arrangements which he made for my trip to England and France.

The subtle Disraeli was wont to say to those who sent him a book, that he was "lying under a sense of obligation" for the gift, but I am more fortunate in being able to express with entire sincerity an appreciation too deep for words of the abundant kindness which was shown to me by men of all classes in England and France.

They gave me the most memorable experience of my life, and I find added pleasure in the

reflection that the people of England and France, in conferring so much honour upon a single American citizen, were thus seeking to show their appreciation of the good will and co-operation of many thousands of Americans, of whom I was but one, who in this great moral crisis of civilisation disdained to be either intellectually or morally neutral.

My work for a just cause was but little, and was only with my pen and voice. If it has had any permanent value—and if it has it is a source of greatest gratification to me—then it has been, on the one hand, in vindicating the justice of the Allies' cause in neutral countries, and, on the other hand, in interpreting the sentiment of the American people to England and France and to some extent softening a rising tide of resentment against the American people. If I have even to a slight degree accomplished either of these objects, I shall regard it as the greatest public service of my career.

The little that I was thus privileged to do by voice and pen seems petty and trivial in comparison with thousands of Americans, who have enlisted in the ranks of the Allies and many of whom have already given their lives as the measure of their devotion for a just cause.

In my speech at the Pilgrims' Society in London I stated that 4000 American citizens had enlisted

under the Maple Leaf, and that some 10,000 had enlisted under the Tricolor. These figures were obtained by me from credible sources more than a year ago, and I am now similarly informed that the citizens of my country, who have enlisted in the Canadian regiments, now exceed 16,000, and these do not include American citizens who for various reasons have given either assumed names or assumed places of residence at the time of enlistment.

As for France, no one knows how many Americans are serving the cause of the Tricolor and incidentally repaying the immeasurable debt that the United States owes to France.

More than 100 American boys are now aviators in the French Army, and I was deeply gratified to learn from a French General that there were no better in the service.

I should not mention this except to contrast my trivial service with that of these brave Americans, who without the protection of their own flag, have enlisted to serve the cause of the Allies, and also because a prominent Canadian is reported as having recently stated in a speech in Canada that no American citizen has shed any blood for the cause of civilisation in this titanic contest, and this was said at the very time that Norman Prince,

of Boston, was lying dead in a French hospital with the Cross of the Legion of Honor pinned to his breast.

Many other American boys have already joined the noble army of martyrs, and this consideration should, and I believe will, offset those shifty and self-serving American politicians who have compromised and even betrayed the noblest ideals of their country.

Travellers' tales are generally uninteresting, but when written, as is "To Verdun from the Somme," by a keen observer, and when they deal with some aspects of the most tremendous spectacle that was ever produced upon the great stage of the world, then they have not only interest but value.

The visit which Mr. Brittain and I were privileged to make to the front was to me a revelation. From the time that I took passage at Folkstone to the time that I again landed at that port of entry, I was filled with amazement and admiration.

One of the compensating benefits of this war is that in an age supposed to be material and commercial, the heroism of man has reached high-water mark.

Never did men do more, never did they suffer more, and never, as I confidently believe, will they achieve more for the future welfare of civilisation.

The splendid spirit of the soldiers, who are fighting under the Union Jack and the Tricolor, the perfection of equipment, the evidences of systematic preparation, the abundance of artillery, the almost inexhaustible supplies of munitions, the unquestioned mastery of the air, the marvellous adaptation to the art of war of inventions, the complex organisation, all these not only profoundly impressed me but gave to me, as an ardent believer in the justice of the Allies' cause, a quiet spirit of confidence in its ultimate, and I hope and pray not too distant, triumph.

If the pessimists in England, France, and elsewhere could be taken to the region of the Somme and see what Mr. Brittain and I were privileged to see, their pessimism would disappear like the mists of the morning. No one could have the privilege of meeting Sir Douglas Haig and General Joffre in the intimacy of a private interview and leave either of these great commanders of mighty armies without a deep impression that as every crisis brings forth a leader, so this titanic struggle has given to the world masterful leaders of armies, the least of which is greater than that "grand army" with which Napoleon crossed the Niemen.

Very impressive to me was the personality of General Joffre. When I stood in his presence

and saw that calm, self-restrained, unassuming, modest but masterful man, I then appreciated how he could have the courage to take the most momentous decision yet reached in this war, when in its earlier stages he ordered a retreat to the line of the Marne and made possible that wonderful triumph.

Less than a month had elapsed since the war had begun. The Allied armies had suffered no great reverse. The Russian armies were then invading East Prussia. Joffre had under him an army of a million men, including that heroic expeditionary force which England, with sublime self-sacrifice, sent to the aid of its former enemy, but present Ally, across the Channel.

Had the Allied armies lost their *morale* on that retreat, Joffre's memory would have been likened by posterity to Bazaine, and he must have known the tremendous consequences which awaited his decision—consequences, if the event proved unfavourable, as disastrous to him as to the cause of France, for which he was thus willing to sacrifice reputation and life itself. Joffre never hesitated, and with a fine appreciation of the strategy of the moment, brought the brave soldiers whom he commanded back to the line of the Marne.

Nobly did these soldiers, whether it was a

Tommy Atkins who had not many weeks before seen the sun setting on the lovely lanes of England or the Poilu fresh from his country village in France, respond to their leader's call.

A class of critics has attempted to convey the impression that the English contingent did not accomplish all that was expected of them in the battle of the Marne. To this a twofold answer can be given, that not only did the English contingent do all that the French Commander-in-Chief asked them to do, but that it was the heroic stand of Sir John French's soldiers at Mons and at Le Cateau which in part enabled the whole great army to make its orderly retreat to the point of vantage from which they made their great and triumphant offensive.

While England exists, indeed while an English-speaking race remains in any part of the world, the glory of "the first seven divisions" will be celebrated by the wise and the just in every part of the world.

Great as were their services in the retreat from the Sambre to the line of the Marne, yet the English army vindicated the most noble tradition of their service in the two great battles of Ypres, when the "thin red line," outmastered in numbers, in equipment, in artillery, but never in courage

and endurance, held the great salient and said to the red tide of Prussian invasion—

"Thus far and no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed."

Any book that describes these brave soldiers and their gallant comrades who serve under the Tricolor cannot be superfluous, for the little that the world can do to recompense them for their struggles and sacrifices is to show them appreciation.

To many the knowledge of such an appreciation can never come, for the inexpressibly pathetic fact about war is that those who fall on the field of honour are not privileged to see of the travail of their souls and be satisfied. They are not even given to view afar the promised land before the hour comes to them to die. Death seals their eyes in ignorance as to the result of their labours.

The saddest verse of Walt Whitman was that which he wrote of Lincoln, in which he expressed the pathos of the slain soldier's end—

"O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;
Rise up—for you the flag is flung—for you the bugle trills,
For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths—for you the shores a-crowding,
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning;
Here, Captain! dear father!
This arm beneath your head!
It is some dream that on the deck
You've fallen cold and dead."

It is this fact which makes a pilgrimage such as Mr. Brittain has so charmingly narrated a pious one. The events which he has graphically recalled are in the truest sense sacred.

When we stood in the ruins of Fricourt and later walked the streets of Verdun, we were standing upon ground which will for ever be regarded as holy. Martyrdom hallows, and wherever a man has laid down his life for the country that he loves or a cause in which he believes, or is willing to do so—for the readiness is all—that spot must be for ever sacred, for it is a true Calvary, and there is again repeated the infinite tragedy of the Cross.

Thorwaldsen has imperishably chiselled both the pathos and the grandeur of this truth in his dying lion at Lucerne. The Leonine head, so expressive of nobility, the infinite pathos of the eye, and the suggestion of fidelity in the paw, which tightly presses the shield of the Bourbons, are expressed with moving effect.

In comparison with the sculptor's chisel or the painter's brush in commemorating heroic deeds spoken or written words are generally poor; but there was once a great leader who voiced for all time the spiritual significance of a battlefield, when, speaking at Gettysburg, above the graves of martyrs, whose ranks he was so soon to join, he said—

"But in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. *The World will little know, nor long remember, what we say here; but it can never forget what they did here.* It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us; that from these honoured dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion; *that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom, and that the Government of the people, by the people, and for the people, shall not perish from the earth.*"

JAMES M. BECK.

NEW YORK,
Oct. 31, 1916.

PREFACE

KINDER hosts than the Armies in the Field of Britain and of France it would be impossible to imagine, and the experience of having been their guest during the days of the Great Advance will ever remain an intensely valued recollection.

I went across to France with the Hon. James Beck of New York, the distinguished advocate who has been described as the Allies' best friend in America, and who proved to be, incidentally, as delightful a travelling companion as he is a friend.

After memorable days with the advancing British Forces in the valley of the Somme, the French Foreign Office most kindly made arrangements for us to visit the unconquerable fortress of Verdun, following which we were taken along the battle-line of our great Western Ally, through the Argonne and Champagne to Rheims, spending some time en route with the Russian soldiers who are fighting on the soil of France.

During this visit to the French lines another American joined our little party, and was very welcome. He was Owen Johnson, the well-known novelist and magazine writer.

No one could return from seeing what it was our privilege to see during those wonderful days (which may prove to have marked the war's great turning point) without feeling an intense desire to add his little tribute, however humble, to the splendid spirit and wondrous heroism of the two great Armies.

My reward for this small effort will be more than adequate if these few unpretentious notes, just odd jottings from the memory of an entirely unskilled observer, succeed in conveying to one casual reader a single new impression of the great effort which is forging a new history. Even the smallest phase of this certain-to-be immortal struggle for honour and for liberty is well worthy of most studious attention.

TO VERDUN FROM THE SOMME

TO VERDUN FROM THE SOMME

CROSS CHANNEL OUT TO G.H.Q.

ACCORDING to Herr Karl Baedeker, "Boulogne is an important herring port, and its harbour presents a very busy scene!"

As to the herrings, I cannot speak with authority, but there is no kind of doubt as to the very busy scene; and all on account of Herr Karl and his compatriots.

We had crossed from England on a grilling summer day, not a cloud in the sky, nor a ripple on the sea; the roving U-boats may have had designs upon us, as they must have had on many a previous occasion, but the British Admiralty has provided the U-boats with so terrible an assortment of troubles between Folkestone and Boulogne, that occasions for frightfulness have been pitifully few upon that channel route since the first days of the war.

Notwithstanding these safeguards every precaution was taken on the boat, and one of the first orders given was—

"All must wear life-preservers!"

A neat war shade of grey gave the ship quite a bellicose appearance; in the past we had known her in other colours, but in them she never looked so well as she does to-day when she is engaged in the transport of thousands of stalwart khaki-clad warriors.

And what a wondrously happy family they were! They might have been going to France for a holiday, instead of being bound upon the return to the very grim work upon which most of them had been engaged through many an anxious month.

When light and careless repartee gave out music instantly succeeded, the Scots especially distinguishing themselves in the choral line. There were mouth-organs, also, some of them well played.

"I want to go 'ome," said one great hefty fellow, with a face arranged entirely on prize-fighter lines.

"Why?" asked his pal.

"Because I am too beautiful to take risks with; I might get 'it."

"Garn," was the comforting reply; "that fice

of yours 'd turn a thousand bullets. It'll tike a clahd of poison gas to fix you, Bill!"

When we passed a boat returning from Boulogne we were hailed by strenuous cheering, mingled with shouts of, "Hi, you're going the wrong way!" After this more than one mouth-organ again became intensely occupied, and the men going back to Blighty must have heard us long after they had lost sight of us.

The fighting men upon the upper deck bore the badges of innumerable regiments, and, as a Marseilles train happened to be waiting for us, the officers aboard were setting out for every part of the world in which Britain is at war; and let it be remembered that our Empire has been waging war in far more sections of the earth than is generally realised by the man-in-the-street, even in the Allied countries.

Yes, Boulogne undoubtedly was almost too busy to notice us at all. And the process of our landing was accompanied by far less excitement than used, before the War, to mark the landing of a simple-minded Channel steamer.

Alongside the dock we slid without a sound. There was no shouting. British and French co-operation was quite perfect.

The necessary formalities followed rapidly,

noiselessly, efficiently, so that in a matter of minutes we were out bag and baggage on the safe side of the Passport bureau, and ready to start for any of those fascinating spots in France, which during the War so frequently acquire the name of X.

We found waiting for us a big Daimler car from G.H.Q. in charge of a young officer who proved to be as delightful a companion as he was a first-rate and able guide.

Joined by a distinguished General whom we had met on board (he was going back to G.H.Q., before leaving for an interesting mission elsewhere), and also by Lord Bryce—assuredly the youngest man of 78 I know—we decided to lunch there in Boulogne. Our guide took us to a quite excellent little restaurant he knew of where man could feed both wisely and well.

A mournful-looking waiter attended to our needs, and the reason of his sorrow we appreciated when we learnt that Boulogne was out of beer! The supply was of course not up to that of peace times, and the demand—well, the weather was undoubtedly hot, and French beer is invitingly light.

TO G.H.Q.

OUR most enjoyable luncheon over, we wasted little time in making our way to the Staff cars which were waiting outside.

A roomy vehicle is the normal Staff car, containing nothing of ornament but much of utility, and with sufficient space to pass a fairly comfortable night inside, should occasion and late work require it.

There are perhaps few better roads known to the motorist than that which strikes into France by way of Boulogne; driving along it under the sentry's eye one could not help recalling many a previous run in the free and easy days of peace.

The century was very young, and the automobile still a novelty when my first long tour by car led me over that selfsame road.

For it was the starting-point of a tour of many thousand miles through Central Europe with my good friend Sir Arthur Pearson, as fine a driver as ever handled a wheel, and as energetic a traveller as England—or any other country—possessed; we had crossed *viâ* Boulogne because at that time we

considered it to be about the only harbour where they knew how to deal with such a delicate piece of freight as a motor-car!

Curious thought to-day.

His sight has left him now, alas, but to his splendid work of looking after the British Soldiers and Sailors blinded in the War, Pearson is devoting the same boundless energy as he did to every phase of life in those early motoring days.

The familiar streets were filled on this occasion with soldiers galore, together with a mass of heavy traffic which was mostly engaged upon the pressing business of the War; leaving behind such items as lorries of ponderous build and other lumbering craft, we reached at length the suburbs of Boulogne, and set out on the open road.

There is no speed limit in the "Zone des Armées," and we travelled along at a merry pace during the rest of the day, visiting a series of interesting "somewheres" in the great rolling country of Northern France.

Right back to the coast the British occupation of this section is very real. Khaki is all-pervading, and is undoubtedly popular among the civil citizenry. Probably the sight of it conveys a sense of safety.

Notices in English are on all sides; at the

sentry-box stands "Tommy," side by side with his new brother, the French "Poilu," and it was no single challenge, but those of both which met us at every entrance and exit of the towns through which we ran.

During the afternoon we found ourselves in one of the most important spots in France, being none other than the Headquarters of the British Expeditionary Force.

Unconsciously, I must have formed in my mind some concrete idea of the sort of place that G.H.Q. would be, but as so frequently happens, the imaginary and the real, like Euclid's little dictum of the parallel straight lines, find it difficult to meet. They didn't meet, this time, by a very long way indeed.

A certain distinguished General took us across to his mess, where we found a cup of tea and a sample of ration honey, just about what we most wanted; and if work had not called him from us we would willingly have lingered with him in the garden of that unobtrusive villa.

Certain people there are in this world whose presence is as stimulating as the finest tonic; when difficulties confront them, they decline to be depressed, but have a happy knack of overcoming them without discussion, and never lose that

intense joie de vivre which is as indescribable as it is infectious.

General X. was that kind of man.

In control of a branch of the Service as fascinating as it is all-important, he appeared to us to be an ideal selection. During our brief visit it was our good fortune to meet him several times, and we went away from France convinced that on all the fighting fronts there cannot exist a finer soldier or a kindlier and more thoughtful host.

OUR HEADQUARTERS

THE sun was well upon its way towards the horizon as we completed the last stage of our journey through rich and productive land. The ripening crops looked as if they would be heavy, and doubtless labour will be duly forthcoming to deal with them, though there is, of course, no superabundance for the fields in these days when the world's busiest harvester is Death, and the Great Harvest—men.

But our attention was riveted on something other than the growing crops of grain, for we were passing the first British Regiment we had seen on its way to the Front, a sight which was enough to thrill the coldest-blooded neutral, and none of that kind were in the Daimler.

At a cross-road we pulled up and watched the brisk battalions pass. Theirs was a line regiment, just a line regiment from the Midlands, probably made up of men who, a few months before, were pursuing peaceful civilian careers as clerks, farmers, and shop-assistants.

Merely clerks, farmers, shop-assistants—but that particular line regiment has since met and

defeated the pride of Germany's great Standing Army—the famous Prussian Guards.

Splendidly fit the marching men seemed, burnt, as they were, to the colour of the setting sun. They thrilled us as they swung along the white highway, with that careless look of you-be-damnedness which the British soldier wears so well.

On a strategic line which ran through the rippling waves of corn, crawled a troop train of tremendous length, and hearty cheers for the boys upon the march rolled out from their comrades on the rail.

From a third direction appeared a contingent of the strange and mighty caterpillars. Curious things these are, and slow of progress, but they make up for their appearance and lack of pace by their ability to drag what looks like inconceivable weight over what seems like quite impossible country.

As a climax to the busy scene upon the surface of the earth, some ten or twelve aeroplanes suddenly appeared and like a flight of duck headed to the East to pay their oft-recurring compliments to Fritz.

The City of A—— at last. The waving of a red paper before the guards at once passed us through, and a few minutes after it had waved we were receiving a cordial welcome at our hotel from

Colonel ——, who very kindly had made all possible arrangements for our comfort.

This hotel, together with one or two others, in the city, must be doing an enormous business, for rooms and restaurants are perpetually in demand to the last available square inch of space. At our hotel were numerous officers who combined to work the two available bath-rooms overtime. To see the long line waiting for the next vacancy was almost reminiscent of "early doors" at a popular play.

After a somewhat lengthy dinner, for the reduced hotel staff could not cope effectively with the increased custom, we strolled out to look at the fine old cathedral, or what we could see of it, for now our only light came from the stars, the town being as dusky as in mediæval days.

Early to bed is the rule in A., for on our return, which was certainly no later than 10.30, the sole inhabitant whom we encountered was an excellent gendarme, accompanied by his large and faithful police dog. This dog, so his master told us, lived in the hope of one day tracking down a Hun, and so careful had been his training that our friendly gendarme was willing to wager a year's pay that the intelligent animal would succeed in scenting an intruder of this sort from anywhere to anywhere else within the City limits.

THE SOMME

THE SOMME

AT an early hour in the morning our officer guide was waiting for us, and no time was wasted in loading up the car with steel helmets, each one accompanied by its differing brother designed to guard from gas, and, finally, ourselves.

Our driver was a sturdy son of the County Palatine who reeled off to me his version of the names of the villages we passed, many of which, in this valley of the Somme, are now, and for ever will be, household words.

He never shied at a single name, and as French does not always glide, as she is spelt, into broad Lancashire, his results occasionally were curious.

Being a native of the adjoining County of Yorks I was successful with most of his villages, but was badly left behind on the recital of an interesting incident he had witnessed at "Meeooww." In vain I studied the map in the effort to get upon the trail of the settlement with the name like a cat's

wail, but all in vain. It was not until next day, when our way took us through Méault, that a great light burst upon me.

I don't defend my somewhat dull perception, for it was really a very mild example of Anglicisation. Some heard later were entirely untamed.

As we gradually approached our lines the scene became more and more animated. Nor were the evidences of greater activity merely visual. The roar of the guns, which we had heard for several miles, increased in intensity, though one seemed more conscious of a feeling than of a sound.

Sentries were everywhere and we were inspected courteously but firmly on many occasions, convincing us, who needed no persuasion, that our progress would have been but slow had we not come as guests of the British Army.

Our first experience of a screened road was on the summit of a good-sized hill where several hundred yards of canvas, sometimes fifteen feet in height, stretched along the near side, successfully interfering with the too inquisitive German's view of the traffic. At least we hoped so.

We were pointed out a brigade which was resting in a great hollow far below us, that is to say it was supposed to be at rest but really the " rest " took

the form of games of football and other equally strenuous relaxations under the roasting sun.

But the men all looked as hard as nails. Plainly a little additional sun was as unlikely to worry them as a few bucketsful of rain would have been.

Through Albert we went.

Street signs in large clear letters gave needful information, and if, when the inhabitants return, they find that we, the British military occupants, have altered the familiar names of their old roads and streets to such curious titles as Piccadilly, Shoe Lane, and Cheapside, they surely will forgive us—for *c'est la guerre.* In the meantime the man in khaki finds it easier to navigate a certain High Street than a possible Rue de Méault.

Now few of the old residents are in their homes, and the little town bears many marks of Kultur. The most amazing sight is the church spire, on the summit of which the great statue of the Virgin has fallen to a horizontal position. She now rests thus, holding The Child out over the stricken town.

One is quite familiar with this extraordinary picture, which photography has made known throughout the world, but actually to stand below and gaze up at this work of a German shell gives quite a new and strange impression.

If it is possible, that statue should be allowed to remain for all time in the position it now holds, as a reminder to generations yet unborn of the meaning of a visit from the Huns.

For another mile or two we went forward on a rising road until we were pulled up at the edge of a fair-sized wood. At this point, we were told, the judicious motorist left his car. So, disembarking, we advanced on foot.

War traffic of every kind was wending its way between the trees down a steep hill, and over the frequently rough ground, by the side of an ever-crowded road, we made our way through clouds of choking dust.

Near the bottom of the hill a portion of the wood had been cut away and in its place we gazed upon one of the sad reminders of the War, the last resting-place of many a British hero.

In days to come this little cemetery, tended with everlasting affection and care, will surely be a peaceful spot in one of the quiet back-waters of rural France, significant to coming generations of the brotherhood of combat established between two great free peoples, the brotherhood of combat of free peoples against aggression and oppression. To-day the little cemetery is on War's high-road, shaken day and night by the terrific and incessant

vibration from the guns. Its meaning was perhaps less clear to us, who stood with bared heads beside it whilst occupants for other similarly sacred spots were being made by German guns within eye-range, than it will be to our children, who will read of it, or, mayhap, visit it by chance when on a holiday in distant summer times; but it had its very great significance. One looked up quickly, almost with a furtive eye, from the roughly glorious little earthen mounds to the faces of the soldiery about and wondered if among the living men that day were any whom to-morrow would find "sleeping out" in deathless glory; one fiercely marvelled at the horror of the minds steeped in militarism which had imposed on the poor fellows who lay there the necessity of death in manhood's prime to save the freedom of the world; one thought about the mothers, wives, and children of the men who had trudged bravely o'er the road of Supreme Sacrifice to find its end was here! One breathed a little harder, too, at thinking of the needlessness of all this tragedy; above all, one was thrilled with wonder at the calm of all the fighting men about who knew their turn might come to-morrow—or to-day—and yet went on so cheerily, with such fine determination, so modestly, so irresistibly!

This was the first soldiers' cemetery we had

seen, and all this wondering and more held us there in reverent curiosity for some little time. The graves, arranged in rows, were marked by simple crosses on which were inscribed the name and rank of the brave men who slept there. Placed on the cross in many instances were the caps which never would be worn again and many a gallant Scotsman's bonnet.

There was a deep appeal, a thrilling inspiration about this little graveyard seen as we saw it when the roaring of the guns was in our ears, which could not fail to bring home to the least thoughtful in the group not more the tragedy than the glory of this war ; not more the sacrifice than the privilege of the volunteers of Britain, who had laid them down to rest upon this hillside, wearied, but faltering only when their lives were forfeit.

BEHIND THE FIRING LINE

BEYOND this valley with its pathetic little Ground of Glory the road ascended for two or three hundred yards and then the wood abruptly ended.

We were at the Front at last, gazing upon a scene which we are in no wise likely ever to forget.

A great open country stretched before us, alternate hill and dale like the rolling prairies of Alberta, and until lately quite as fertile as those grand Canadian Plains. But now this splendid country formed a scene of utter desolation.

There was not the faintest sign of any kind of vegetation except a few rank weeds; and as for trees—all that remained of yesterday's fine thickets were charred and broken stumps.

As if stricken with a plague—as indeed, it had been—the harassed earth was pitted with thousands of shell-holes, while here and there a mighty crater reminded us of the colossal nature of this war.

Across the dust-coloured surface of the earth no green was left upon these fields—trenches old and new zigzagged in all directions and from right and

left—from everywhere, it seemed—guns of every calibre were belching flame and shell in the direction of the enemy.

The Boche, in his turn, seemed to be in just about the middle of his morning hymn of hate, for shells galore from his artillery were screaming through the air and throwing up gigantic clouds of dust.

We made our way into the valley. Involuntarily I kept my eyes so firmly fixed upon the wonderful scenes ahead that more than one shell-hole was necessary to persuade me that some attention was required for the immediate foreground. To fall into a shell-hole is a disconcerting business.

A North Country Regiment was in that valley, its temporary Colonel being an entirely delightful Scot who kindly volunteered to take us round and show us what he could.

As useless, wondering and wandering civilians, we apologised sincerely for intruding, and he explained at once that we quite failed to realise how great a treat we really were. At first we were not sure just how he meant this. Civilians undeniably look bizarre in the midst of countless uniforms. But then he made it clear that what he meant was that, after many months of soldiers only, a visit

from travellers in ordinary clothes gives almost a touch of Home!

In a large shell-hole where one poor fellow's life had been ended the night before, we sat while Colonel M—— described the recent fighting.

Time moves fast and now those days are history, but it was our first experience of explanation on the spot, and we listened spell-bound to the simple, calm, and soldierly account of how one section of the British Army bore itself at the beginning of the "Big Push."

On our way up the southern slope of the hill the Colonel introduced us to his dug-out, which was of severe simplicity, the four or five of us who wormed our way in seemed to adequately fill it, so much so, that our sympathies were all with the brave six, whom we were told, had perforce to tuck up there at night.

Strange contrast this grim, war-days' home formed to the lovely peace-time mansion of the genial British gentleman who was our host! We commented on this.

"Oh, this is not even a war-time home," he answered. "This is my temporary place of business."

Grim business!

Not long afterwards his business moved. Moved

forward! He was, and still is (God be thanked!), a splendid business man—at that particular grim business!

From the top of the adjacent rise we had a marvellous all-round view, with every detail wonderfully defined, and were in no way surprised when we were told that from the point of view of visibility no better day had been experienced for months.

Our guns were taking full advantage of it, and although we could see a goodly array of German shells falling on the slopes to the north-west, and on La Boisselle to the north, we had the satisfaction of perceiving that our own artillery was sending a continuous stream of steel on to the German line.

During the walk I picked up German trophies of varied interest. An Australian we met added to my little horde by presenting me with a brand new specimen of the latest German gas helmet. All these things I lugged along in the heat and dust for some little time, then I gave away the gas helmet and gradually began to moult the least precious of my remaining treasures. Heavens! How do fighting men go forward with equipment!

Often have I heard of our men on the march getting rid by degrees of all but their entirely

essential impedimenta. As my load was a mere shadow of what even the bare essentials of a soldier's kit amounts to, whatever I may have previously thought of that aspect of the wastefulness of war now resolves itself into whole-hearted sympathy with and some understanding of the wastrels.

On our way back to the wood we watched some wonderful manœuvring on the part of two or three good British aeroplanes, which suddenly appeared, apparently born from the void, to inform a German prospector that he must let our lines alone.

Through a pair of powerful glasses (made, I regret to say, in Germany) I was just devouring this exciting spectacle when to it was added the thrilling sensation of seeing a Boche machine suddenly brought down, whether by one of our guns or by a fighting plane I could not tell. But the result was all we cared for, for the enemy machine turned over and, like a stone, fell to the ground.

The number of aeroplanes in flight throughout this brilliant summer day was not less than amazing: but almost all were marked with the white circles of the Allies and very few were decorated with the Iron Cross.

I could not help recalling the flamboyant language I had heard at a fairly recent East End election gathering when a certain gentleman whose meteoric career has since ceased to illuminate, vividly portrayed the British Flying Corps as a thing of the past, and generously handed the palm to the Fokker as the all-conquering King of the air. A long-continued exhibition of air-facts exactly as they were was by no means the least pleasant of our amateur war experiences.

From what we personally witnessed in our incomplete and rapid tour, it would be difficult to exaggerate the superiority of the Allies in the air; and this we plainly saw, not only in the fighting on the Somme, but equally in our later journey along the lines to Verdun.

The sporting instinct, individual nerve, and, it must be added, machine-excellence of the British and French service, have made it so uncomfortable for the soaring Boche that he does not dare to initiate one fight in twenty.

On the other hand, the Allied airman (and this has been admitted by the Germans themselves, who usually do not lavish praise upon us) will never shirk a fight when challenged, whatever may be the odds against him.

One of the many proofs of our supremacy in

this direction lies in the unbroken sequence of our observation balloons, curious sausage-like creations which festoon the Allied Front with the regularity of telegraph poles. Much would the Hun give for the privilege of taking down that harassing festoon.

On the other hand, our boys and the French have had the greatest possible success in annihilating German "Ruperts." Even my very limited experience at the front revealed wide gaps in the German line of air observers.

With the utmost *sang froid* our aviators drop their bombs on these ungainly Boche machines and if a miss is scored, dive down till the distance makes the next trial almost a certain hit. Such terror have they driven into the Hun observers' hearts that I was told on fairly good authority that more than one German has been observed shaking out his parachute for an instant drop to earth on the mere appearance of an approaching Allied airman.

On returning again to the wood, we were overtaken by a long line of ambulances, filled with our wounded, who were being carried to a temporary hospital behind the trees. The arrangement seemed quite perfect; nothing that modern science and skill has evolved to alleviate suffering was miss-

ing; but how we felt for those splendid fellows, as they were slowly driven with the tenderest care over a road of necessity imperfect, and through almost tropical heat!

War, like life in general, is full of contrasts, and in that wood we came across a vivid illustration of the light and shade of this existence.

Behind us was the never-ceasing roar of German shells and the strident answers from our own big guns, beside us many a car-load of our splendid wounded, all helpless, some, alas! forever broken in that morning's fight; whilst, somewhere hidden in the wood a military band reeled out the latest rag-time tunes!

For a moment it all seemed unbelievably incongruous, but the stirring music certainly brought happiness to a very large audience, and a contented mind meant much that day in the valley of the Somme!

AN HOUR'S REST

HOW good the breeze felt after the stifling heat of the dusty tramp as, once more in the car, we made for a ridge some three or four miles behind the guns, where we were to take our short al-fresco lunch!

A large camp was near the spot we finally settled upon; not that there was anything particularly unusual in this, for in that region at that time it would have been extremely difficult to have settled anywhere far from large camps.

A large and shady tree also was there, a fact far more remarkable than the nearness of the camp, for the gunners of this war have been like maniacal lumbermen.

While we were enjoying our simple repast and a following mild cigar, thousands of men passed us in a never-ending stream. Some were going backward to well-earned repose, some were going forward to heroic death, and all were cheery, business-like, and brave.

To the ignorant outsider who has the privilege of taking but a glimpse at it, a great deal of this war appears to be a wondrously casual business.

In all directions one sees little groups of men who seem to be mere aimless wanderers, doing a bit of something here and there, perhaps, but moving with no desperately definite purpose as men in warfare are instinctively believed ever to move.

One just looks at them, and wonders, very naturally not venturing to ask, what specific job any particular contingent may happen to be engaged upon ; but, if such a query chances to be made and answered, one invariably discovers that all are working cogs in this very great machine so wonderfully and fearfully constructed, the power of which is generated by the burning up of human lives and high explosives.

But it all is so infinitely wide-spread that to the lay mind the theory of sheer-haphazardness continually recurs.

ARTILLERY

LUNCHEON over, we decided to leave the car where it was standing and to walk across the great level plateau in front of us, from the edge of which (a mile or so away) we were told that we would find a fine view of the surrounding country.

This particular plateau, apparently neglected by the gods of war, appeared to be the happy growing ground for thistles. There were acres of them, of the tallest and most violently aggressive kind.

Even the most patriotic Scot would have had enough of his national emblem after a very short promenade through that vast prickly thicket.

But the panorama was well worth the effort, for the atmosphere was clear as crystal, and far below us we could see spread out all those famous little villages, or what was left of them, which have figured so intensely in the epoch-making stories of the great battle of the Somme.

As I sat beside my friend Beck and gazed upon this enthralling scene, I could not help reflecting how in his intense keenness for the Allies' cause,

he was so entirely representative of the best elements of the United States.

In his country the Germans have done all they could to put us in the wrong, and in untold directions have carried on a wondrously skilful campaign. But all their machinations failed to turn aside the real America from its profound belief in the eternal justice of our struggle on behalf of Democracy and Freedom.

The thought also occurred to me that if any of the hostile batteries before us had known that the brilliant author of the "Evidence in the Case" was at that moment well within range of their guns, the little patch of earth upon which we stood would have become most unhealthy; for no written word ever hit the German harder than did the damning verdict arrived at in this judicial work, after its clear, concise, and detached consideration of all the arguments on either side.

For a long time we sat on that hill's crest listening to the rumble of the guns. Never for three consecutive seconds was there a cessation of their firing, and the great variety of their angry voices told us that the chorus came from Artillery of almost every kind known to modern warfare.

Between the rattle of the small stuff and the deep dull tone of the heavies a vast range of man's

most terribly destructive genius was represented. I could not help wondering whether some one with a discriminating ear and a thorough knowledge of music might not be found, in days to come, to translate these tones into an inspired, inspiring score. He would need to do far more than that, however—he would need to fashion instruments unknown to any orchestra at present, were he really to tell the tonal story.

While we were watching the eternal line of smoke which stretched from North to South as far as the eye could follow, we heard and saw a terrific explosion in the midst of Delville Wood. Whether it was that of a gigantic shell or marked havoc done by one of ordinary calibre which had found its way into an ammunition store, we could only guess, but the appalling crash of the report put all ordinary bursts into the shade, whilst the dense, white mass of smoke which instantly rushed upwards through the trees and drifted slowly off, formed a fair counterfeit of one of Nature's clouds against a sky to which, that day, she had sent none.

On our return we inspected a compound full of German prisoners, most of whom were Rhinelanders. A bedraggled lot they were and sour of face.

However, they seemed thoroughly comfortable,

if not contented, and doubtless life, there in that compound, passed by with fewer shocks than lately had been falling to their lot from the massed artillery of the "Contemptible Little British Army."

Yet one could not help but wonder whether the average German prisoner really appreciated the very humane treatment he received in that compound behind the Allied Line. We cannot play the low-down game of retaliation upon men helpless to defend themselves, but an inspection of our methods of dealing with the Hun, accompanied by some reflection upon the treatment which at that very moment he was meting out to our poor men at Ruhleben, at Wittenburg, and elsewhere, left one feeling strongly that England never must agree to any formal terms of peace until the actual criminals have been brought to justice and have suffered the punishment they so richly deserve.

AT our hotel that evening we had quite a little gathering for dinner, and we were delighted when a certain General came in to join us. He helped us to interpret and understand things; he amplified our knowledge of the day's events; he stirred us, cheered us, fixed in our hearts determination which we could carry back to those at home.

After we had commented on the oppressive weight of the steel helmet on a sultry summer day, the General informed us that he had just seen one which had gone through a very useful form of test.

One of our Tommies, it appeared, had been surprised by a Boche at quarters too close for the immediate use of the bayonet. The Boche, who held his rifle by the barrel, swung it high in air and brought it down on Tommy's helmet with such terrific force as to immediately transform the headgear into a very sorry imitation of a Homberg hat. But notwithstanding change of shape the steel held firm, and that particular Boche was promptly added to the German Casualty List.

We decided that steel hats were not oppressive

even in hot weather when the wearers had such work to do.

The General also had a lot to say about the splendid work of British chaplains. They had acquitted themselves, he said, with the very best along the Western front, seeming to be entirely oblivious of any sense of danger. On Sundays, he declared, they were extra busily engaged upon their rounds, each frequently dragging a harmonium about in an ambulance car, putting in as many as seven or eight services during the day, and as often as not praying, singing, preaching, joking, comforting in a neighbourhood which was receiving the most careful of attentions from the enemy.

There is no doubt that the "Padre" in general —and at the front are those of every faith—has made good in this war. Many are the stories grave and gay of which he is the hero.

There are no "frills" on the chaplains of the forces and, as good men and good sportsmen, they are eager to play in the great combat against evil, or if their especial work is not required at any particular moment, to do any other needful thing which lies within their power.

Sympathetic and broadgauged, they are ready to overlook little slips in the vernacular on the part of fighting men. They plainly fully realise that

war cannot be carried on with strict adherence to the "Young Man's Book of Etiquette," and that at all times a ready reply is apt to carry more weight than tons of offended dignity.

Somewhere in France I heard a story of one parson, as popular as a man could be, who had a little dug-out in a pretty hot section of the line. This dug-out he had neatly labelled "The Vicarage."

Drafts had come in one day, and two cockneys, fresh to the front, crawled past. At the strange sign the first pulled up and, turning to his pal, remarked: "Blimy, Bill, if this 'ere ain't a blank-blanked Vicarage." This remark rolled inward to the parson, who at once stuck out a tanned and smiling face, half covered with fresh lather. He greeted jovially the startled Tommies, with: "That's quite right, my lads, and here's the blank-blanked Vicar. Is there anything that I can do for you?"

That evening I happened to meet a young man of quite another kind, but for whom I also conceived a very sincere respect. He was one of the special Official Cinematographers from the War Office, and a very tired man he looked.

We had had some particularly roasting days, and these he had spent at the frontest front of all fronts,

taking every risk and as many films as possible, so that the Britisher at home might realise how gloriously his fellow-countryman upon the Somme was upholding the honour of the British flag.

He was a quiet, modest fellow and would tell us little more than that the heat had rather knocked him out for that day ; but from more than one who had seen him at work I learnt something of the risks he continually took in order to carry out his job.

Those who know anything of photography will realise that he must have sought the warmest of corners to obtain effective results, and must constantly have undergone the experience of being shelled by long-distance guns, and shot at, at close range, with short-distance rifles, while, in the meantime, having none of the pleasurable and oft-recurring satisfaction of being able to strike back. Even the mere physical effort of transporting a cinematograph through narrow trenches during the preceding tropical days must have been considerable ; often the placing of his camera so that it would "see" good pictures meant agility and real endurance in addition to professional skill and judgment of a rare order.

May he entirely succeed in the task of putting together a series of pictures which shall mirror every

phase of the great advance, and which will be shown not only at home and in the lands of our Allies, but in neutral countries also, and especially throughout the United States!

When in America on a somewhat lengthy mission last year, there was nothing more disheartening than to see advertised on every hand cinema pictures of the German Army under every conceivable condition of work and play and rest and fight, while nothing worth looking at was shown anywhere in the way of pictures of our troops. Certain superior people still smile when moving-pictures are referred to, but whether we like them or not they have come to stay and represent a great and ever-increasing power.

It is difficult to realise that this invention, almost of yesterday, has made such gigantic strides that last year it succeeded in climbing up to fourth position among all the mighty industries of the United States, and so from the triple point of view of interest at home, propaganda work abroad and living history for future generations, that plucky "Movie Man" had all my most sincere good wishes.

ON THE PERONNE ROAD

ON THE PERONNE ROAD

THE thermometer had not fallen by so much as one degree when we took to the road next morning for another visit to the Somme Front; but if it had risen another ten it would not have succeeded in destroying our keenness to go on, if only as humble spectators, to the line where the re-shaping of the world's future was in progress.

On our arrival in France, having been shown the wonderful programme which had been sketched out for us, those responsible for the arrangements laid us under a still deeper debt of gratitude by suggesting that if there was any other part of the line we wished to see, or anything else we cared to do, we had but to name the fact to make it sure that the suggestion, if feasible, would be carried out.

Naturally, we realised that our kind hosts knew better than we could what would be the most effective programme. In the flat lands of Flanders, the civilian observer can see but little,

but in the hilly country of the Somme possibilities for observation are everywhere, and in these valleys one of the world's greatest battles was at that moment being fought. Imagine our self-congratulation when we found that at this very crisis of the War, during the first real turning of the tide, we should be afforded the wondrous privilege of seeing history made in the most interesting sectors of the British and French lines!

* * * * *

We were soon out of the City, on the road, driving through clouds of dust, churned up by untold numbers of lorries.

Constant reiteration had accustomed one to the statement that this was a Petrol War, but a few hours of experience were more persuasive than months of reading.

Never had I realised that there were so many lorries in the world as we had set eyes on during the last few days. And not only lorries rattled along, propelled by the same rare and useful spirit, but 'buses, mobile batteries, ambulances, caterpillars, and every shape and kind of car, all passed us, bound both ways and every way, helping to make breathing difficult, and successfully making roads more dusty, and less firm of surface.

So presently we were impressed by the insistent

fact that this is a veritable war of petrol. Petrol has captured war as, during the past few years it captured peace.

To a degree amazing to the average man this war is one of machines, but given something like a balance between mechanical engines of destruction on either side, then the human element begins to count, and the man who has the "biggest heart" becomes again the final factor. He is tried and he is tested, and presently the world finds out what he is made of both in body and in soul.

For several miles we followed the route of the previous day until we took a south-easterly turn and ran into Méault—our chauffeur's "Meeooww."

Then we pushed ahead en route for Fricourt, upon a road crowded with wheels and troops, but never so crowded as to interfere with the very finest traffic arrangement. The last mile into this now famous little spot was a fairly steep down gradient, and the first sight of the ruined village and desolated valley was vividly striking, reminding me for all the world of the view from Bethany across the parched and dreary wilderness to the Dead Sea Valley far below.

Wilderness indeed was that strange stretch of waste and arid land in France, a type of hopeless panorama which might have given Doré inspiration

for new "Inferno" drawings, and might have given Dante inspiration for a fresh canto.

At the bottom of the hill we stopped, and, taking the advice of a military policeman, tucked away the car behind what once had been a village cemetery. Then, through the heat and dust, we walked slowly up the wrecked main street, between the little piles of brick and stones which used to be Fricourt.

One did not have to be a Napoleon to realise what terrific fighting must have been necessary to the capture of this place. The lines of German trenches across the road below, the thousands of yards of wire entanglements (formidable obstacles even yet), the village built on a steep slope which made of every house a fort, and the whole place bristling with machine guns, completed an *ensemble* which, it was quite plain, even to an amateur, would be easy to defend and deadly difficult to conquer.

But nothing had been able to defy that khaki wave, and Fricourt is ours to-day.

In the terrible fighting for this village many a gallant English Regiment suffered heavily. The decimation of the olden days was practically inverted, for I believe that more than one battalion came through with barely ten per cent. of its strength intact.

Having carefully scanned that hillside from below, having seen the endless strands of German wire entanglements and pictured the guns behind every pile of stones, one realised a tithe of what it must have meant to rush that slope.

Occasional walls showed the lines of former cottages, but for the most part even the walls had disappeared. Household gods and bits of twisted metal were mixed up with the ruins, traces of an occasional harrow or plough were still about; but nothing valuable remained of the possessions of the once prosperous and happy village.

Behind us our big guns were busy, and the roar of the great shells as they soared over our heads toward the enemy's lines was constant.

Some way further up we came across an anti-air-craft battery, quiet for the moment, but very much on the *qui vive*.

Also I ran into an old friend from Toronto, who took us over to a recently captured dug-out which had been for many months the luxurious and doubtless happy resting-place of several German officers.

Taken over by our R.A.M.C., it now was used as a forward dressing-station behind the lines to give first aid to the wounded.

We were cordially invited to have a look round,

and found this subterranean home a truly wondrous example of German thoroughness.

Two long flights of well-made steps led to a number of dry and perfectly ventilated rooms, while a series of additional apartments were entered from a corridor which ran the entire length below.

In the lower room, which was the largest, and which we took to have been planned for the German Officers' Mess, were signs of every comfort. There were good rooms for the officers' servants and an excellent kitchen. Electric lights and bells, large easy-chairs, a well-fitted book-case with a glass front, wall-paper, and many other things were there, certainly sufficiently elaborate to have made resident Germans, or any other type of citizen, extremely comfortable. Doubtless it all had been worked out for a tenure of three years, or the duration of the War. At least eight "bolt-holes" had been provided for escape in case of that entirely inconceivable event of a direct attack.

I was told that when this abode de luxe was surrounded the Germans poured out of it like rabbits; however, the warren was so deep and held so many Huns that the majority could find no exit through these bolt-holes, but were captured without a possible chance of escape.

On reaching the earth's surface after inspection

of this extraordinary place, we found the anti-air-craft battery loosing off shell as rapidly as possible, and firing almost perpendicularly.

Looking upwards, we saw the object of attraction, which, despite its terrible height, was being rapidly festooned with beautiful, snow-white smoke rings.

There is a gripping fascination about a fight in the air, and I noticed that many an old hand dropped his job for the moment and joined us as a spectator of the (upon the Somme) not unusual sight.

Through the glasses I watched shells burst round the German plane, and then saw an Allied machine make its appearance from nowhere out of the blue. At this the Boche steered off, but not before he dropped three bombs.

The first fell fairly near our car, whereupon the driver very sensibly tucked himself into a dug-out, from which he was slowly emerging on our return. He brought with him a German newspaper of very recent date, and also a report that at the far end of the long cave was the body of a poor French soldier, which apparently had been overlooked.

The remaining bombs exploded a few yards further on, one, unhappily in the midst of a little group of men, several of whom were badly injured.

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INTO the car we got again, and went through Mametz to the Peronne road, wasting as few moments as possible in the process, for we were none too far from the German lines, and the German guns were attending to that district fairly systematically.

The desolation which had been so impressive at Fricourt ran right down the valley and showed more vividly than any words could describe how keenly every square yard had been contested.

These positions the Germans had laboriously fortified with every engine of defence that modern science has produced. They had had months in which to perfect their laborious efforts, and surely looked on the results as impregnable.

It was no surprise attack which carried them, for surprises are now almost things of the past, but the irresistible *élan* of British regiments of the line, after an intense and stupendous preparation by British artillery.

The groundwork of success was laid in the workshops of Britain, and that fact is one which jumps to the eye wherever one watches the fighting on the Western Front, or wanders through the country where an advance has been made.

Would that every munition shop in the land could send out one well-chosen representative to see for himself the amazing proof of the labour of the workers; a representative who would take home to each of his comrades a vivid story of what the shell they manufacture means for the boys in the field.

Great as is the work of our factories to-day, the pressure must be kept up to the highest pitch. No encouragement to persevere in the stern nerve-racking job of ceaseless manufacture could equal that which inevitably would be exerted by a popular fellow-worker who had seen and knew.

For some time we stood enthralled, watching a number of our heavy howitzers which were growling fiercely at the enemy. Wonderfully disguised by means of shrewd devices were these monsters, as with unerring scientific accuracy they dropped their tons of steel on unseen targets behind the hill, or, may be, sent them on into a further valley.

A little later we had climbed a neighbouring crest, from the edge of which we had an all-embracing view of the country, stretched from Fricourt to Longeval, including Contalmaison, Pozières, Mametz, and Delville Wood, the last-named being in the centre of a literal inferno of high explosives.

My American friend, Beck, who is physically short-sighted, though of a penetrating legal vision, thinking he might get a better view on the left of the ridge, walked off, to try. I was wholly satisfied with the aspect of proceedings as visible from where we stood, and sat down behind the car, grateful for even its slight shade.

For some minutes I sat listening to the eternal roll of the guns, watching the firing of our own and the bursting of the enemy's shells. We were sitting, the chauffeur and myself, as in the dress-circle of the theatre of war—fascinated spectators.

But presently it dawned on us that things were changing. It was as if we had transferred our seats from the dress-circle to the stage. We were not actors, but it seemed as if we might be reckoned part and parcel of the play—that dreadful play of countless tragic episodes. For the Germans had commenced an unpleasant operation in our very neighbourhood: that operation which is known, I think, as "searching the slope." And the slope thus suddenly beginning to be searched was that on which we rested.

It started, as a matter of fact, on the southerly brow of our particular hill, not more than some 500 yards away, and then at sixty-second intervals followed successive applications of shrapnel, each

bursting about fifty yards nearer to us than that which had preceded it.

For a little time we found a curious fascination in watching the carefully calculated methodical plan of fire, which constantly was bringing the explosion closer, but when the distance had decreased until little lumps of steel commenced to sing somewhat close to us, bouncing through the air with that peculiar and unmistakable "ping" which ricochetting steel adopts, I shared the chauffeur's feeling that "it was getting a bit too warm to be healthy."

In the meantime, our gallant escort was bringing back his other charge, who had wanted to see more. The military man was waving to us energetically to drop back.

We did so with no hesitation.

The region round that hill presented a busy scene, and men of many regiments were hard at work doing many things we did not understand, and doing them with boundless energy. I listened for some time to a rapid round of repartee, much of it carried on on true Bairnsfather lines, and again felt how quite impossible it is to exaggerate the downright cheerfulness of the British soldier, whatever difficulties confront him.

One round and ruddy-faced driver I watched

starting off with a heavy load of ammunition for what was doubtless a dangerous point.

"Where are you off to, Bill, this bright sunny day?" called out a pal.

"Oh, I'm just aht for a bit of a drive for the benefit of my 'ealth," came the reply, followed by a hearty laugh.

The All Highest's Great General Staff may sit up late at night working out new and awesome frightfulness to launch in the Valley of the Somme, but the man in khaki will remain, as he always is, entirely irrepressible.

TOMMY ATKINS

ON our return journey we passed through a village full of Highlanders, who turned out to be the South African Scots. They were enjoying a little well-earned rest. They had done magnificently in recent fighting, and had been somewhat badly knocked about a week or two before. A splendid sturdy body of men they looked, the picture of keenness and ready whenever asked, to again do credit to the two great countries of their origin.

In a neighbouring village we found ourselves at the —th Army headquarters, where that Army, or much of it, was likewise resting, after great work beautifully done.

In a little villa serving as the Officers' Mess, we were welcomed by Major ——, the brother of a distinguished and gallant Admiral, and by him presented to General —— and two or three members of the staff. We were readily persuaded that a cup of China tea was exactly what we needed, and discovered that Cooper's marmalade is none the worse out of a tin.

As a Yorkshireman, I was interested in hearing

that more than one of the West Riding Regiments, which had taken so glorious a part in the capturing of Fricourt, were having a short rest in and around the village. Major —— was full of praise for the fine fighting they had done, and said the Yorkshire boys were "just straining like hounds in leash to get back at the Boche."

Through the middle of this selfsame village ran a somewhat murky canal, upon either side of which I noticed a long line of Tommies almost shoulder to shoulder, each one undoubtedly full of hope and sure of catching fish. I had no opportunity of speaking to them as we drove by, but will venture a small wager that in civilian life more than one had belonged to a Sheffield Fishing Club.

The name of Tommy Atkins has insinuated itself so deeply into our daily speech as to make it almost difficult to realise the time when the British soldier was known by any other.

Although, as a name, it may not be one replete with dignity, yet it is one which has endeared itself to all within that far-flung area of thirteen million square miles which calls itself Britain, and to a good many others who dwell outside.

The first T. A. is said to have been a certain gunner in the Royal Artillery, who achieved fame by inventing a pocket-ledger of such utility that

it became known far and wide as a Thomas Atkins; at what period the name fell from the ledger and descended upon all the original T. A.'s brothers-in-arms is beyond my limited knowledge.

But there is no uncertainty in the fact that Tommy, as we have known him now for many years, has been, and is regarded by the world at large as every inch a soldier and a man.

Up to this present War he has always been looked upon as rather a separate entity, somewhat of a thing apart; but in this gigantic struggle he is of the very nation, of the very Empire itself.

Cool and unperturbed, he refuses to give way to extremes, and just as he declined to be depressed in the harrowing days from Mons, so to-day he declines to be over-elated when victory begins to dawn.

Like a real sportsman, he has played the game from the start, and will continue to do so to the finish.

But notwithstanding his splendid cheerfulness and his perpetual jests, no one must imagine for a moment that his life at the Front has not been one continued super-hell on earth; even the flash of things which the onlooker gets during his brief inspection, is sufficient to drive home that fact, and

to cause him to try and understand what must be meant by the stern reality of month after month of this appalling life in the trenches.

If under such conditions the gallant lads can force themselves to see the brighter side of things, it is in spite of the horrors by which they ever are surrounded, and is born of a spirit which naught on earth can daunt.

It was my good fortune on this visit to see contingents from each of our great Dominions. In many ways they differ from one another, but they were uniformly alike in the magnificence of their fighting and their grim determination to overwhelm the Boche.

The British Empire was great before this War,—so great that the German Higher Command decreed it must be broken ; but the Sons of the Motherland knew how to fight for their freedom and liberties, and the tyrant of Potsdam will surely find that instead of breaking up the British Empire, as he had fondly hoped, he has succeeded in welding it together for all time in bonds far stronger than steel.

On arrival, hot and dusty, at our hotel, it fell to my lot to earn the sincere gratitude of a great husky Australian, who in his vain endeavours to get a bath was carrying on an energetic pantomime

with a perplexed *femme de chambre.* When I asked if I could help him, he told me that all the French he knew was "*bon jour*," which had so far proved entirely useless in getting a bath filled for him.

G.H.Q. AGAIN

IN the cool of the evening we set out for G.H.Q. to dine with General X and his Staff, and an entirely delightful experience followed. A finer and more interesting group of men it would be impossible to meet; for nearly all have been out from the first days of the War, when one man had to do the work of ten.

All too modest to speak of their own achievements, we did learn from them something of the work done by others in these historic early days, and it was with sincere reluctance that we left that little villa for our long ride home.

After the scorching heat of the day, nothing is more exhilarating than a drive through a perfect starlit night, and we pushed along at a good pace over the well-kept roads with full headlights burning: somewhat of a contrast to our darkened lamps in England.

There appears to be no rest at night, even behind the lines, for twinkling lights were everywhere in evidence as well as signs of varied and unending movement.

On our arrival at the hotel we met a little group

of officers just in, who told us that the valley in which we had spent an interesting hour or two the day before had been very heavily shelled that day, and we sincerely hoped that our good friends of the ——th Regiment, who had looked after us so well, might still be cheery and uninjured.

For a long time I sat out on the balcony of my room and watched the flashes of the guns which lit up the horizon from North to South as far as one could see.

It was an endless pyrotechnical display, but to me it seemed curiously noiseless, and led me to puzzle over the vagaries of sound ; for here was I, within a few miles of the front, looking at the flashes from the very guns themselves, or at least at excellent reflections, and hearing practically no hint of the reports, whereas a week or so before, when staying with friends on the Sussex coast, in far-off England, not only did I hear the booming of the guns by day and night, but the windows rattled constantly and the vibration was of the kind which could be felt. I presume there is a scientific explanation for such apparently eccentric behaviour on the part of sound-waves.

SIR DOUGLAS HAIG

BEFORE we left for Paris, en route to the French Front, we enjoyed the great privilege of lunching with the Commander-in-Chief and his staff at a simple little château still partly occupied by the owner and his family, some of the younger members of which were playing about in the garden when we arrived.

Sir Douglas Haig, who comes, of course, from that great race north of the Tweed, is the beau-ideal of the British soldier. Strikingly handsome, he is essentially of the fine strong type, and with that kind of chin one associates with a man who is capable of driving through every difficulty. With all this he possesses the most charming personality. Instinctively one feels him to be one who will see his great job through; and one reflects with added pleasure that this self-same view is held by all who serve under him.

As we had found it in the field, during our short sojourn at the British Front, so at G.H.Q. itself we could not fail to be impressed by that quiet confidence, than which nothing is more infectious.

With the G.O.C. in C., as with the latest joined

recruit optimism is the rule in our Expeditionary Force. I firmly believe there are more pessimists in any one London Club than in the whole of the British Army! At G.H.Q. they knew the best and worst of everything, the why and wherefore of each move, so that their optimism we were sure existed on the firmest of foundations—that of actual information and all-round understanding.

We came away from that little château with many unforgettable impressions, impressions of the kind that one does not wish to write about, but retains as pleasing memories, to be talked over only with the travelling companion who had equally enjoyed them.

We are fortunate in having at the head of what is really vital—the British Army in the Field—a brilliant soldier, entirely the master of his task, who has won esteem and real affection from all the Armies serving under him.

PARIS

PARIS

WE had left behind the never-ending roar and pitiless heat of the Somme battlefield, and from rooms in the Quai d'Orsay were looking over Paris, more beautiful than ever, under the softening rays of the setting sun.

These rooms were the headquarters in France of an American friend, a member of the Institute of France, who like so many of his countrymen on either side of the Atlantic, is devoting himself body and soul to splendid work for the Allied cause.

We had talked for some time of the wonderful days we had spent with the British Army and of the hoped-for visit to Verdun and the French Front.

From the present we drifted to the past, the past but twenty-four months old, when (our friend explained) he had looked out from those same windows and listened to the German guns which the hand of fate seemed to be pushing ever closer to the Capital of France.

It was there, he said, on just such a perfect evening, that he had gazed across Montmartre and wondered how long it would be ere the Germans came.

If worst had come to worst no one can doubt that the Army of Paris would have put up a gallant fight in defence of each and every foot of its beloved city, but what would this fight from barricade to barricade have meant with every wall and every house a fortress? There could never have been another Paris, a replica steeped in that strange and spiritual beauty of the Queen of Cities, a beauty which the Hun will ever fail to understand.

But fate, together with the soldiery of France and a certain "contemptible little army" from the Channel's British side, were able to will it otherwise.

To-day in Paris German guns are seen, not heard, as they make their appearance in ever-increasing variety in the courtyard of the Invalides; but one day Paris will reverberate with an all-impelling sound when is heard the tramp, tramp, tramp of the returning Sons of France, marching under the Arc de Triomphe as they make their way through the Champs Elysées to the finest square in the world. The war then will have ended, Paris

will be safe for many years. The whipped Hun will crouch within his kennel.

From a favourite view-point above the Rue de Rivoli, I often glanced across the garden of the Tuileries towards the glorious Place de la Concorde, hoping that it may fall to my lot to see that long line of grey-blue heroes welcomed to the heart of France by a city which will know well how to honour them.

Five months had passed since I had been last in France, and the change in the entire atmosphere of Paris could not fail to strike me very forcibly.

At the time of my previous visit the city had been undoubtedly full of determination and hope, but the future had been somewhat obscure. It then was difficult to see what particular course events might take. But at the time of this next visit, go where one would, the general opinion had solidified into what might be defined as supreme confidence in an assured certainty.

"It is but a question of time—they commence to crumble" and "*On les aura!*" were what one heard many a time between Neuilly and Vincennes.

The uniforms of all—or almost all—the Allied Armies were to be seen on the broad Boulevards during these August days, their wearers were

enjoying to the full their well-earned leave and not wasting a minute of their time.

Even the men of little Montenegro were in evidence, for the King of the smallest Allied Kingdom, although at the moment bereft of his realm, was the guest of the ever-hospitable Republic.

Incidentally His Majesty happened to possess the same excellent taste in hotels as our own humble selves, but we did not discover the fact until a guard of honour descended upon the Meurice and we were privileged to watch with interest the Montenegrin Monarch's greeting of President Poincaré.

FRENCH AIRMEN

DURING our sojourn in Paris, and while the necessary preliminaries for a visit to Verdun and the Front were being arranged, it was suggested that it might be of interest for us to see something of French aviation at Y. and X.

There was no need to repeat the invitation, and at the first available opportunity we set off, accompanied by a delightful Captain in the Flying Corps, who for the moment was working at the engineering side of Aerial Warfare, after having been somewhat severely wounded when over the German Lines.

The same blaze of sunshine which had grilled us on the Somme had followed us to Paris, so that the run through Versailles in a fast open car was a very pleasant and almost a cooling experience.

At Y. is an enormous institution, now devoted almost entirely to the repair work upon aerial machinery.

Entering the grounds we passed through a series of buildings on either side of the road, and were informed that the huge houses on the right hand side were for housing, manufacturing, and

repairing machines lighter than air, while those on the left were devoted to planes. These two aspects of aviation apparently were under entirely different control.

After being presented to the various officers in charge, who gave us a general outline of their work, we proceeded to go through some of the workshops, redolent of life, buzzing like beehives.

At right angles to the first series was a second row of enormous sheds and hangars, in front of which stretched a great grass plain. In these sheds were dumped the casualties, planes in every state of injury and dilapidation, some of them seeming, to the untutored eye, to be merely heaps of torn and tangled wood, canvas, and metal.

However, the wonderful French mechanics seem able to cope with anything that is sent along, and out of apparent chaos to evolve a new machine.

Then, all spick and span, the re-born article, gleaming with varnish, is wheeled out into the brilliant sunshine for its second trial trip.

Every kind of machine is here, from the great Caudron, with its double engine, giving a fine impression of strength and pace, to the latest speedy ——, the fleetest of them all.

X. is the great military aviation depôt, and there one sees an endless chain of hangars, backed

by a marvellous factory in full operation. We were taken through this factory, and found it wonderfully interesting.

It would be impossible to imagine more perfect machinery than the many cylindered engines, or anything more beautiful than the grain of the specially selected wood from which the propellers are made.

Wings were being carefully stretched, stitched up, varnished and finished by contingents of women who seemed as interested in their national work as they were contented with their lot.

What an industry this has become! although it seems only yesterday when Wilbur Wright invited me over to Le Mans to inspect the first machine that ever flew, and when, with eyes standing out of my head, I watched this mother of biplanes thrust up a short incline by a species of mighty catapult, and follow this quick start by sailing round the Champ d'Auvours. We dined together, a dozen of us, at the Dauphin, at Le Mans that night.

Very few of that little party are alive to-day, and of those who have gone Wright alone died in his bed. What England owes to that American!

I wish he might have been spared to witness the wonderful developments of X. to-day!

France, always alert, was his ready disciple; but England had to be kicked into aviation. In these days, when the vital aid of the plane is one of our overwhelming advantages in this war, it is only fair to remember not only what our country owes to the American, but what it owes to the persistent efforts of such men of imagination and resourceful energy as Lord Northcliffe and Lord Montagu.

According to one of the officers who took us round—the ever rising cost of freights and coal were making the manufacture of aeroplanes (among that of many other things) far too expensive. He was fervent in the expression of his hopes that we in England might be able to make some move which would reduce these most important items to something like a reasonable level.

I don't know how many aeroplanes there are at X. when they are all tucked away in their neat hangars, but during our visit the air seemed to be filled with every sort of flying machine. Some swept round in gigantic circles, others looped the loop and then soared aloft until they seemed to be of the size and aspect of mosquitoes. In these great heights they would swing gracefully, and from them they would dive, dropping like stones for startling distances, only, instead of realising our expectations by crashing to the earth,

to steady up, resume an even keel and start upon their homeward course.

Notwithstanding the warmth of the day there was a distinctly noticeable wind characterised by unexpected little puffs. So much we learned from a curious kind of gauge which closely resembled a great canvas sock with the foot cut off.

Just before sundown a young army of beginners took the air in a swarm of Blériots, their instructions being to take a low line, top the first hill, descend, then up again and return. There were no non-starters as with a roar all rose in chorus. The return was a quaint effect, for, skimming just above the ground, they made a bee-line for home, and as they approached looked absurdly like a covey of monster grouse about to settle.

The officer in command told us of the great success of the Americans who had joined the French Flying Corps. They learnt quickly, he said, were full of the idea of competition, were game to tackle anything and were thoroughly liked by their French comrades.

We met one fine strapping young fellow who originally had come across from the United States to join the French Cavalry, but who since had found his *métier* in the flying branch.

X. and Y. are inspiring sights. One left

them with the feeling that France has indeed achieved the mastery of the air.

With our French friend we dined at the Trianon and drove back in the cool of the night. As we passed by the side of the old aqueduct, which stood out gaunt and shadowy in the dark, I looked up and saw what to my amazement appeared to be a couple of stars with bright red tails.

Wondering whether it was the super-excellence of a Trianon dinner or a sudden attack of defective vision, I pointed them out to our French flying friend, who, laughing heartily, said that they were nothing more than two machines upon their regular nightly round. Paris was always well guarded against Zeps. by these and others, he informed me.

AMERICAN HELP

ANOTHER institution in connection with the war which I visited in Paris was the splendid American hospital in Neuilly. This evidence of the affectionate regard of one great Republic for the other was but one of many, and those responsible were extremely fortunate in obtaining possession of a brand new building, a great school-house, wonderfully adapted for the purpose in view.

The visitor cannot fail to be impressed with the supremely capable way in which all the details have been carried out. American organisation and science together with the cheerful ministration of American women and girl nurses are working effectively for the Allies' cause at Neuilly. The whole thing is most impressive—spirit, outlay, and efficiency.

Many an American endeared himself to the Parisian heart during the terrible days of the city's crisis, but I doubt if there is one who will be remembered with more affection than Myron T. Herrick, that Ambassador of the great sister Republic who declined to leave when the legions

of Von Kluck were almost at the gates. The Allies owe him much.

To American representatives in the lands of the enemy, also, the Allies, and particularly ourselves, owe other debts of gratitude which never can be repaid.

One evening with a friend from the U.S.A. I wandered up to Montmartre and sought out a quaint little restaurant very near the summit of the hill. Of space inside the tiny building there is so little that the restaurant proper is a sequestered alley at the side of a pathway with a gradient of about one in four.

The good restaurateur was at the front, but his lady, like all these wonderful French women, is carrying on, and she swept us up to a small table under which the cobble stones were moderately horizontal. The waitress came to take my orders, wearing a short pink frock (barely knee length), white socks and shoes. Her name was Madeleine and her age was eight.

Between the courses Madeleine sat on my knee while we very seriously discussed what should be next and whether something else wasn't perhaps a little better.

The little waitress told me very cheerfully that Papa would come home after the war was won;

in the meantime, she explained that she must help her mother as well as she knew how. The spirit of her people filled her little heart. Who will deny that she was doing her real bit to keep the home fires burning ?

TO VERDUN AND THE
FRENCH FRONT

THE VALLEY OF THE MARNE

"VOILA, there they were stopped! That village marked the furthest effort of the Boches! They were driven back and will go further soon, but in those days, which one does not forget, they were near enough, God knows!"

As my *vis-à-vis* jerked out this information in sharp staccato sentences, I gazed with all-absorbing interest through the windows of a moving train at a rapidly receding village in the valley of the Marne.

Yes, no one can deny that it was near enough. The high-water mark of the Teutonic tidal wave seemed to have appeared almost before our powerful engine had got into its stride as we rolled away from Paris.

We had foregathered that morning on the platform of the Gare de l'Est, all necessary formalities properly observed, and with full realisation of our good fortune in being permitted to visit the French Front, and above all to see something

of the heroic defenders of Verdun, who at this critical period, when, unconquered and unconquerable, after six months of such a siege as the world had never known, had added eternal lustre to the spiritual fame of France.

Our little party, as had been the case in the visit to the Somme, was of the smallest possible dimensions. We had disposed of our luggage, reduced of course to the lightest limits, when at the appointed time, arrived Captain B.-L., of the French General Staff, our delightful escort, guardian, and guide, who proved to be the very soul of courtesy and kindness.

Every arrangement he made was as perfect as it could be. Never was there the faintest suggestion of a hitch from start to finish, and if we had been three kings instead of ordinary Anglo-American citizens we could not have gone through this wonderfully interesting experience under better or more enviable conditions.

We had arrived betimes at the Gare de l'Est, for trains do not leave every minute for the "nearest to the Front," and one takes no chances of missing nowadays in journeying through Eastern France.

For some time I watched the crowd, that wonderful crowd so full of quiet dignity, pathos, and confidence, which on both sides of the Channel

we have learned to associate with the trains leaving for the army zone.

Then, as the result of studying a large map of the system, a sudden thought intruded startlingly upon my consciousness—the thought that this great trunk line, some distance after we were to leave it to-day, ran into the enemy's territory! Here was an inanimate link between us and the merciless people who had plunged the world into this war!

If you are a Londoner, stand on Paddington platform, study a plan of the G.W.R., and try to imagine just how you would feel if Exeter were the last station under the Union Jack, and if all the rest of "glorious Devon" and the West, were occupied by a frightful and ruthless enemy.

A few days later I saw the last mile or two of the big French main line, a kind of No Man's Road, before it passed under German control. A sad sight it was.

Four lines of rail, once brightly polished steel, occasionally showed through the weeds which overran them, in short lengths of dirty rust. Telegraph wires hung loose from posts, one or two of which lay, broken, across the line. A solitary signal-box had been disfigured by a shell, and its futile signals all had fallen down. But

that did not matter, for there were no trains to stop and none to let pass by.

If we cannot imagine such a thing in England, we may perhaps dimly feel what the reality must mean to France.

Although there was a pleasant breeze outside, the air within the carriages soon began to warm as we sped along beside the Marne, until we looked with envy at a flying man who was cutting coolly through the air in the same direction as ourselves.

An interesting General Staff Officer who had joined us in the luncheon-car, enlarged at length on the Air Services of England and of France. His particular work had given him immense experience along almost our whole line.

He said the Somme was no exception to the general rule, but that from the Belgian Coast to Bâle the Allied airmen had acquired the most amazing superiority over German flyers, so much so that the latter hardly ever ventured out alone across our lines, but made his none too frequent attacks in squadrons.

The Marne flows through a wondrously fair country, and the heavy crops, under the burning August sun, made a great show from the railway carriage window. It is indeed a land worth fighting for.

On either side of the line there were always soldiers to be seen, but the khaki effect to which we had become so accustomed had now changed into the pale blue of the Poilu, though here and there we passed bodies of the Corps d'Afrique dressed in the familiar brown.

Not only the river but every available pond was more or less full of bathing soldiers, whilst others squatted on the banks, washing clothes.

The only men we noticed working in the fields were territorials, busily helping women and children to keep up to the highest possible pitch every form of agriculture. None seemed to be too old and none too young to give a helping hand towards the maintenance of the country's first and greatest industry.

From the train we saw few traces of the German Army's mad retreat, save now and then a wrecked or damaged bridge. I noticed one fine old stone structure of the sort which obviously had stood for many a century, but now was minus its large arch. It was in process of rebuilding as many another injured bridge appeared to be. The French are not delaying reconstruction and are as wonderful at this as they are at fighting.

RUINS OLD AND NEW

AT Vitry-le-François, a little town in Champagne, about 125 miles from Paris, we left the train and found two fine fast cars waiting for us—one was a Charron, the other a Peugeot. Both were comfortably fitted up and lined with grey.

At a goodly pace we swept along the broad white roads, glad of well-fitting yellow goggles to keep out the dust and glare.

At the little town of Revigny we pulled up while a regiment passed by, and at the same time looked with interest at five or six quaint little yellow balloons, which, half deflated, were drifting across the town. What their purpose was or had been we failed to find out.

Leaving Revigny, which had suffered severely in the early stages of the fighting, we ran through a section of the country where was decided one of the fiercest struggles of the Battle of the Marne. In this section we chanced upon one of those striking contrasts which the pace of modern travel throughout the war area continually affords.

We had drifted into a little spot, agreeably named Trois Fontaines, a quaint and charming village

containing just one street which led to the big iron gates of a picturesque château. Capt. B.-L. who, like all his compatriots, had a keen eye for the beautiful, intimated that a little visit would be well worth while, and so it proved to be.

The château, which was built on either side of the gateway, facing a fine open lawn with broad walks belted with trees, was certainly attractive; but the real surprise was a wonderful old ruined abbey, almost buried in the woods and practically invisible until one had almost walked into it.

This entrancing gem of architecture, which had suffered in the frenzy of the revolution, now is roofless and many of its splendid columns are scattered right and left. But Nature is doing her best to atone for what man had destroyed, and mighty overshadowing beech-trees give a cool and restful touch to this ivy-covered ruin.

For some time we sat in this delightfully calm oasis, where it would have been impossible to believe one was so near the battle-line but for the never-ceasing, although distant, booming of the guns.

A few minutes later we were gazing on the wreckage of Sermaize, which was a thriving centre with a small Etablissement des Bains, before the visit of the Huns. We walked all round this little

town, inspecting the tremendous damage done, and noting how few of the humble homes had escaped destruction.

Even this small town shattered by shell-fire impresses one (as one might well expect, but never does) with a thrill like that which stirs one's soul at sight of Pompeii, though the odd remaining walls of the diminutive French villas differed somewhat from those built in Pliny's time.

In the main street was an isolated wall with an engraved slab of marble still prominently displayed upon it. A close inspection indicated that here had been the Girls' School, duly opened by a local celebrity in the days before the war. The school had returned once more to its constituent bricks, the dedication slab alone remaining.

But the French men and women of Sermaize are quite indomitable, like all the rest, and any building capable of being repaired had been attended to already. If reparation had been out of the question, then a little wooden shack neatly tiled in red had risen from the hopeless ruin.

And wondrously trim were these new-built houses, surrounded in most cases by little gardens, each a blaze of August colouring.

In fact to the stranger normal life appears to be almost the rule again in these rescued villages

of France. The ruins of the old church, destroyed by fire and shell, stood gaunt and pathetic, though here again was evidence of that spirit which will not be discouraged, for willing hands had done what could be done to restore the chancel to something of its old beauty. Services were being held as of yore.

But for many a year, despite all reconstruction, Sermaize les Bains will bear the marks of the Kultur visit of a Prussian Crown Prince.

BAR-LE-DUC

IT was almost sundown when we reached Bar-le-Duc, a busy town in the Department of the Meuse, rendered all the busier to-day by the necessities of the War and proximity to the fighting line.

The little hotel was as full as a hotel could be, and so we were escorted by the lady of the house to the annex across the road, where rooms had been reserved.

"They are not what they should be," she explained, "*mais c'est la guerre.*" Her apologies to us, who needed no excuse, were most profound.

In a room above the courtyard we dined a little later, served by a bright-eyed youth of about fifteen. Our ever-thoughtful escort who so constantly gave us of the best, discovered to his sorrow that all the good wine had gone, for after sampling three or four bottles possessing varied titles, we came to the conclusion that the vin ordinaire was infinitely superior to the labelled vintages which remained.

Our distinguished American advocate was very anxious to sample on the spot Bar-le-Duc Jelly,

which he explained was justly celebrated in America, where he said, it figured in every hotel-list.

The youthful waiter seemed almost incredulous, and after descending to inquire, returned with the information that there was no such thing. Further search, however, produced samples of both the red and white varieties, and although our friend attacked them with appreciation, I am not sure that he really enjoyed the satisfaction he would have known had he been able to return to New York with the story that the one place on earth where the celebrated jelly was unobtainable and unknown was Bar-le-Duc.

TO VERDUN

TO VERDUN

WE left Bar-le-Duc shortly after 8 a.m., and although the sun and the cloudless sky still were smiling on us, a gratifying drop in the temperature made travelling almost cool.

Our route lay in a northerly direction across most attractive country, and over roads which appeared to have been recently widened to cope with the enormous traffic moving both ways over them.

Such traffic must be seen to be believed. What it has amounted to, day and night, during more than half a year, none but an expert statistician could imagine. Lorry followed lorry in an almost unbroken line.

Before going very far we began to overtake hundreds of French troops travelling in the up-to-date fashion of this utterly modern war, in other words taking the 'bus to battle. Long, low-built vehicles these 'buses were, with flapping curtains all around them, and they developed no mean speed behind their powerful engines.

Each one was covered with a thick and creamy dust and a good deal found its way inside. Gazing through the "stern-sheets" of the last 'bus of the line was a huge yellow dog, perhaps the Mascot of the Regiment, whose whitened nose, ears, and whiskers gave him a startling appearance as he blinked at us through heavily powdered eyes.

These long conveyances were not without arrangements for internal comfort. On another occasion, when I strolled by a long row drawn up in a little village, I detected a very savoury smell drifting from the vehicles. Closer inspection revealed in each a very handy little travelling kitchen, which we regarded with interest, at the same time receiving the heartiest invitation from cheery French soldiers to come inside and share their meal with them.

At a little village not far from our destination we drew up in a tiny square and watched a motley collection of Boche prisoners being brought along. It was a pleasant sight so near a city the imminent fall of which has been so frequently announced by men of the same breed.

And now the booming of the guns grew louder, and the long line of French observation balloons, which stretched to right and left as far as the eye

could see, told us that we were reaching the famous Salient.

Surmounting a rise where the road was screened in the usual way by long stretches of canvas, we saw the first signs of shell-fire in a heavy German barrage, which stirred up clouds of dust on an opposite hill. At the same time we became aware of the hoarse roar of the French reply.

We were outside Verdun; and it was with wondrously mixed feelings of anticipation and intense satisfaction that we approached the stronghold of heroes upon which for six long months the eyes of the world had been riveted.

However and whenever this war may end, and whatever glorious deeds may yet be accomplished in its course, the name Verdun has won its place in history and will for all time symbolise heroic defence against almost irresistible hordes of barbarism and tyranny.

A few hundred yards downhill, although there had been little or no indication that any city was at hand, and we suddenly arrived. The cars drew up in front of Vauban's mighty citadel; mighty in those far-off days of its construction and an invulnerable centre of intense activity to-day.

After proof of our entirely good intent had been

given to the sentries, we were permitted to pass through an entrance into the solid rock, where we found ourselves in a long tunnel running through a series of galleries to right and left.

A winding staircase introduced us to still further corridors, which, like those below, were brilliantly lighted by electricity, and apparently enjoyed first-rate ventilation.

These galleries buzzed with men as does a hive with bees, and seemed to afford security for endless work by day and tranquil sleep by night.

Closely following Capt. B.-L., we eventually reached the simple headquarters of General Dubois, the Military Governor of the Fortress.

A grand type of soldier is General Dubois, short in stature, with a grey, grizzled moustache and a touch of white hair on his chin. He reminded me irresistibly of Lord Roberts; there was about him that same quiet charm of manner which was possessed by England's well-loved "Bobs," together with that peculiar quiet glance and attractive smile which were characteristic of our Field-Marshal.

Dressed in the rough blue of the French soldier, and capped with a steel helmet, it was not easy to immediately discover his rank, if one failed to see the unobtrusive little stars upon his sleeve.

But we soon learnt that General Dubois needed

no outward insignia of office in the Fortress which he had commanded for so many stirring months. Not even our great Field-Marshal himself was more worshipped by his favourite Indian troops, than this gallant soldier appeared to be by the lion-hearted men in his command.

After giving a few rapid instructions to his staff, the General kindly intimated, to our very great delight, that he himself would become our guide and show us everything that it was possible for us to see.

And so we formed again, and, descending another winding stair, found ourselves once more in the open, now opposite a couple of cars which had been ordered to take us for a tour of the city and its defences.

All the illustrations and photographs in the world would fail adequately to prepare one for the bird's-eye view of Verdun as it is to-day. Unlike the ruined cities in the plains, where it is difficult to get a general effect from any particular point, the "uneven lie" of this once beautiful city makes a panorama immediately and terribly visible from any one of its many hills.

The general effect is indescribable, and to me seemed to somewhat resemble Kingston, as I saw it after the great earthquake, plus battered Pompeii —and "then some" as America so tersely puts it.

The perfect sunny day, with its calm and peaceful atmosphere, and the Meuse flowing quietly by, only seemed to emphasise the desolation. This sad effect of war was driven home by the unceasing gun-fire.

Our view of the town that once had been was just a flash, for we drove rapidly across without a stop, until we reached the entrance to the Eastern trenches.

Here, leaving our cars, we followed the General into one of that series of defences which the Germans tried in vain to conquer. The trenches were very deep and dry, and, to our great surprise, we found them lined with masses of such flowers as marguerites and poppies, with now and then a flaming hint of yellow and blue. My preconceived idea that trenches must always be unending mud, or banks of grit, dust, and stones, went glimmering. Here was a decorative bit of warfare.

We stayed for some time in these trenches, watching the firing at and from an important strategic point ahead, and, meanwhile, were introduced to several fine young artillery officers, together with the marvellous guns which they controlled.

Presently some one asked if we would like to see a little anti-aircraft work by these famous 75's.

Our answer was a rapid and unanimous affirmative, and so we were afforded an illustration of the amazingly rapid calculations which must be habitually made by anti-aircraft gunners, followed by the almost immediate departure of the first shell.

In vain we searched the sky for a possible hostile aeroplane, but the invading Hun was rare in the Verdun air those days. The General had ordered the firing of a round or two to enable us to appreciate the brief time occupied between the sighting of the plane and the beginning of the hunt.

After it was over we found in our hearts a very good excuse for the Boche flying-man who declined to overdo the hobby of manœuvring near French artillery. These splendid little guns left us with no possible doubt that they must be uncannily accurate in the way they search the skies.

In contradistinction to the absence of the German airman, French machines were everywhere above, wandering apparently with impunity over the enemy's lines. It was obvious to the most unversed outsider that here, as elsewhere, the Allies' planes must be of the most priceless assistance to the fine artillery with which they so brilliantly co-operate.

They and the observation balloons are the eyes of the Allied Armies; the enemy's eyes are so often stricken that he frequently feels himself quite blind, but while we were at Verdun, whether the Boche were blind or not his firing never seemed to slacken nor his ammunition to give out.

Upon a slope in front of us German guns were pouring a very hailstorm of steel, searching, perhaps, for hidden French batteries.

In response to this invitation the French gunners presently began to spare no pains to make it known that they were still alive and well.

At the General's suggestion the keen young lords of the 75's took us to see their dug-outs, which appeared to be both dry and airy, and as comfortably fitted up as the circumstances would allow. In the quarters of one merry young subaltern was prominently displayed a large coloured proof of a laughing maid of France, with a war medal securely attached to her breast.

Before we left the trenches I gathered a little bunch of brightly coloured flowers to keep as a reminder of our visit. One of the officers who watched me philosophically remarked: "But yes, they are delightful and doing everything they can. Only mankind is disappointing."

A TORTURED CITY

RETURNING by the same route we had followed earlier, we re-entered the town, stopping for a moment to inspect the damage caused by a German shell. It had dropped in the middle of the street through which we had just driven and, unfortunately, had killed a military cyclist who happened to be riding by, and then torn a mighty hole out of the opposite house. Some time later I was presented with a pathetic relic, the piece of jagged steel which had killed the poor fellow. On the edge of the section of the shell were the letters "Kr——," though whether they stood for the name of the great Essen firm or had some other meaning I remain unable to guess.

From the level of the river we climbed to a certain look-out, not far from which we saw a small ammunition store, which was humorously labelled: "Depôt de Pillules, Anti-Boches."

Behind us a house was smouldering somewhat fiercely, but a well-directed stream of water was rapidly putting out the fire.

Passing the Theatre, which is on the once delightful Promenade de la Digue, by the side of

the Meuse, curiosity led us in for a hasty look round. The outer wall was quite undamaged, but inside the destruction was almost complete. Half the roof had gone, dust and wreckage covered like a shroud the rows of stalls, while the boxes, lined with what once may have been a delicate pink silk, projected gloomily from torn and blistered backgrounds. The scenery had been shifted by a power more explosive even than a stage-workman, and in the semi-darkness hung in tattered fragments about its twisted framework.

No drama ever was performed in that little playhouse which could have been more pathetically appealing than its own appearance is to-day.

Throughout the town the damage done appeared curiously uneven, for some sections had been completely wiped away, with merely heaped up piles of rubbish left behind. Then would come a row of buildings with side and back walls standing, but with that which once had faced the street cut off clean as with a knife, reminding one for all the world of a child's doll's house with its front thrown back.

In these little homes which had suffered, as have so many more, in Flanders and in France, furniture might still be seen standing in the rooms, with here and there a picture on the walls, while

occasionally, certain of the household gods arrested in their fall would be hanging at extraordinary angles over the ragged edges of their respective floors.

It was impossible to look at these pathetic wrecks, born of cruel ruthlessness—each and every one, till some six months before, the abode of hardworking and inoffensive families—without attempting to visualise what an invasion of England would mean. Instantly such thoughts doubled one's deep sympathy for that splendid race which is enduring all this suffering, confident of the dawning of that happy day when the last German is driven from the sacred soil of France.

We were taken to see a large building which had been a prosperous and entirely modern factory before the war. The walls were standing, but the interior was entirely gone, the machinery and the stock-in-trade having been reduced to an unrecognisable mass, principally of twisted metal.

At the corner of another street which rose somewhat abruptly from the riverside, and surrounded by brightly painted railings, was a dwelling which had been of the kind described by house agents as "A most desirable residence standing in its own grounds." It had suffered the fate of so many others, but the attractive little garden

was gay with flowers, and in one corner, beneath the shade of a weeping ash, stood a green table and four wicker chairs, which were so arranged as to give the impression that their occupants had only just left them. There somehow was a very human, very tragic, touch about that little garden. For some reason those chairs, standing just as they had been deserted, appealed strongly to me. It was so easy to picture their owner, a worthy and respected citizen, sitting in one of them at that small green table, with two or three old friends, all scanning the pleasing prospect spread for their eyes beyond the Meuse, while they discussed the calm and comfortable news of other days far different from these.

Not far away a row of shops, once very trim, now very sad, attracted my attention. At one end they had been merely splashed by shrapnel, while at the other they had been reduced to a mournful heap of stones. At about the middle of the row a modiste had had her simple workroom. Above the door her name was still legible in blistered paint. There was wreckage everywhere, and in the midst of the débris, grim and gaunt, stood the last and only souvenir of her trade, a ladies' dress model.

Although a vindictive spirit is not one of the

usual attributes of the Anglo-Saxon, I cannot but hope that at least one German city may share the fate of Verdun, for only by some such means can it be brought home to the German bourgeoisie what have been the sorrows of the humbler classes of the peaceful nation which they sought to crush.

ABOVE VERDUN

AFTER a fairly thorough tour round the lower-lying sections, the General took us to the heights behind and above the city, from whence a tremendous and most impressive view is visible.

Immediately below us lay all that was left of this once prosperous community, a sad enough sight for the most callous stranger, and one which must be heartrending for a son of Verdun.

Beyond the city limits hill after hill rose from the surrounding country. Each had been the scene of terrific fights and the name of each is known to every schoolboy of to-day.

From this impressive look-out point, we were able to follow and appreciate in what manner the monstrous waves of German soldiery had swept up again and again to overwhelm this granite rock. Yet now, at the end of a six months' storm, the rock was firm as ever, while the waves were on the ebb.

What this great resistance has meant for the world will be for history to decide, but no one could have stood beside that doughty old soldier who guided us and who is "seeing it through"

and, with him, could have gazed upon those hills and dales, where had been shed the best and bravest blood of France, without experiencing a feeling far too deep for words.

In a little square below us a large shell exploded as we watched, and on our way down we inspected the damage it had caused. This was purely local, for the shell had landed upon a patch of yielding earth and had merely scattered to the winds a certain amount of harmless soil. However, even this attention was rapidly acknowledged by a series of French guns, which from their cleverly hidden retreats, sent back a very lengthy and, no doubt, effective message.

We were much impressed by the quiet way in which these German visitors were regarded by the Verdunois. His attitude towards them was really, not pretentiously and theatrically, but actually, one of supreme contempt, though one might add that some of us, whom time and experience had not yet inured, could not avoid a slight feeling of curiosity as to where the next shell would drop.

Another point which one could not fail to notice was the very affectionate regard so obviously felt on all sides for the splendid little General. Quick as lightning to detect the smallest deficiency,

he seemed to have a genial word for every one, and gave us the lasting impression that he was enormously master of his job.

Having put in a long, though supremely interesting morning, we made our way back to the citadel with excellent appetites, quite ready for the most memorable little meal it has been my lot to experience.

Once more we were led through a series of galleries till we came to one which possessed not only length but considerable breadth.

This proved to be the messroom. At the far end was the General's table, with places laid for some 15 or 16. Beyond this table, in a great cave cut out of the rock, was the kitchen, whence, from the centre of intense activity, came the most savoury indications of a French cuisine.

Overhead huge electric fans kept the air moving, and at the same time stirred to violent fluttering the assembled flags of the Allies, whilst brilliant electric lamps did all they could to make up for the absence of sunlight.

After a rapid introduction to the Staff, the very interesting luncheon began. Surrounded by the very best of fellows, we found superimposed on perfect confidence a spirit of the most unaffected gaiety resulting in an instantaneous feeling of

comaraderie. Two of my delightful neighbours were the Commandant of the Artillery and Commandant M. of the —— Chasseurs, both full of the most interesting experiences.

The gallant chasseur was one of the most attractive personalities it has ever been my good fortune to meet, and soon we were talking of his native town of Pau, where, in other and happier days, we used to follow the hounds under the mastership of a sporting citizen of Massachusetts. That Bostonian is working hard for France, to-day, and his son has gained honour and renown as a distinguished member of the Flying Corps.

My French friend told me that this feast was a very special one in our honour, and that the normal fare was on more Spartan lines. It certainly was a great war-beleagured fortress luncheon, announced upon real mimeographed menu cards, marked with the Gallic cock proudly standing on the summit of Verdun's stronghold, and crowing derision to the retreating foe.

The General and my other neighbours kindly wrote a series of little sentiments on my card, which will ever be a treasured souvenir. The first line inscribed: "*Ils ne passeront pas, on les aura,*" expresses, as no other words could do, the dour determination which has animated every one of

those heroic defenders since the first day of the siege.

The luncheon closed with two or three most enthusiastic toasts to the great Alliance, together with expressions of sincerest friendship towards the U.S.A. After these we were presented with little mementos in the shape of German fuses, to the accompaniment of the bursting of further shells above us, some of the fragments of which were duly brought down for inspection.

Before we left the General in Command of the Armies in that region arrived, and we were presented to him.

Our kind hosts all came down to the entrance of the citadel to see us start away, and it was with the sincerest regret that we said au revoir to these truly gallant friends, wishing them from the bottom of our hearts a speedy and triumphant conclusion of the greatest siege in history.

THROUGH THE ARGONNE

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LEAVING Verdun, we ran for many miles beside the Boche, in a due westerly direction, which helped us to appreciate more than ever the meaning of the Verdun Salient, and the wondrous way in which it had withstood the Germans' hammer blows.

Over our heads in unbroken succession floated the French observation balloons, inciting us to try and figure out how large might be the family of these queer-shaped creatures, lined up between the Swiss frontier and the far sea.

After passing through a little town which had been somewhat badly chipped, and where, incidentally, the chipping process was still proceeding, we entered the beautiful Argonne, through which the hostile lines ran side by side, almost meeting at the Four de Paris, to the north of us.

The fighting in this sector must have been of a very trying description, for the density of forest and the thick, heavy undergrowth must have made anything like rapid movement impossible. One

officer who had been through a good deal of it, told me that his men were dug in around the tree-roots like rabbits, often near enough to the enemy's trenches to shake a Boche's hand, should that more than doubtful privilege have been desired, but, he added in conclusion, "This form of fighting is not without its fascination."

In the midst of a forest clearing we came upon another little town, where signs of recent destruction were visible on all sides. Here the Hun was a little too close for comfort and firing vigorously, so we pushed along at a rare pace as the shells whistled overhead.

We soon passed through this narrow zone of excitement, for the rapidly rising road turned sharply to the south. Pulling up at a higher level, we were able to contemplate, from a picturesque look-out above the trees, the little village in the valley far below.

The Boche here was still busy, but from what we could make out his missiles appeared to be dropping with unfailing regularity into the unoffending fields.

Our exciting incidents over for the day, we forged ahead, along a perfect road, which, like all other roads upon which we had journeyed near the firing-line, was in wonderful condition, and appeared

to have been considerably widened to cope with the increased traffic of the war. Mounds of broken stones were piled up on either side ready for improvements and repairs. The French authorities let nothing interfere with the great work of keeping up the Republic's highways in these important sections.

When we reached our comfortable quarters in a clean and bustling little town, we found a kind invitation awaiting us to dine with Gen. Gouraud and his Staff, so, after a much needed and thorough brush-up, we got into the cars, and escorted by Capt. B.-L., drove away to ——.

On arrival at the severely plain and simple little building, which served as the distinguished soldier's headquarters, we duly were presented to some six or eight Generals and officers of high rank attached to the Staff of this Army. Almost immediately afterwards General Gouraud came in, accompanied by General X. of the Artillery, and then we all adjourned into the garden, where a most delightful meal was served under the trees.

General Gouraud is a very striking-looking man, with the clearest eye imaginable, a massive, broad forehead, strong Roman nose and a light-brown, pointed beard. Altogether, he is a most impressive personality.

This keen-looking General, who before taking up his present post held an important command in the Near East, wastes no words, and is a master of the most unequivocal and incisive French.

He left us in no doubt as to his quiet confidence in the Allies' future progress. I often had heard that his men were devoted to him, and found it quite easy to realise why they should be. That the same affectionate regard for their chief is entertained by his personal Staff I learnt on inquiring of one what length of service he had put in with the General. "Twelve years," he replied, "*mais pas de service, douze ans de bonheur !*"

Not far from these Headquarters the hopes of Attila and his Huns were wrecked some fifteen hundred years ago. Should fortune so ordain, the French Army in this sector is quite ready to deal in the self-same measure with the hopes of Attila the Second, and his Huns, in turn.

TO THE RUSSIAN LINES

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THE advent of the Russians was hailed with immense enthusiasm throughout France, and their mere presence on the Western Front, apart from their sterling worth as dogged fighters, affords a picturesque illustration of the solidarity of the Allied Powers.

Captain B.-L., having arranged that our little tour should include a visit to the troops of the Czar, we set out one morning across the rolling hills of Champagne, looking forward eagerly to seeing the representatives of yet another Army. And we were most certainly not disappointed.

At the little town of X, where we picked up Prince J. de B., who was acting as Liaison Officer, we also came across our first Russian soldiers, and were much struck by their fine appearance and their spick and span uniforms.

After a short drive across a stretch of country flat as a billiard table, we arrived at headquarters, waiting behind a little clump of trees while our escorts went ahead to break gently the news of this

civilian intrusion. Returning a few minutes later, they invited us to follow them into a little square surrounded by a series of wooden buildings in the midst of which was a wondrously constructed dug-out.

In the square we were presented to the Officer in Command, a fine broad-shouldered, cheery Russian, with a grip like a vice, he in turn introducing the members of his Staff, most of whom spoke excellent English.

Following these introductions, we were taken down into the dug-out, in which the Colonel showed great pride. Lined with pine wood, most artistically patterned, the exterior faced a bank of mother earth which had been effectively "thatched" with pine-needles.

The interior was as comfortable as the exterior was attractive, and the splendid Russian's French hosts certainly had succeeded in fitting up their guest with a most pleasing temporary home.

Then came a tour of the camp and the well-built quarters for the men, between whom and the Colonel the very best of feeling seemed to prevail.

As we entered each long wooden building, all present came to attention with a sudden click, instantaneously achieving the very acme of rigidity; but it was only a temporary stiffening, for as soon

as the O.C. had called out something which may have been "Good morning," and the men had given the correct reply in chorus at the top of their voices, much after the manner of a real "Yale Yell," every one immediately thawed.

The great pine-covered plain struck us as being a most healthy place for a camp, and the men looked hard as nails. The kitchens were a dream of cleanliness, the appetising odour coming from the huge cauldrons of soup making us all feel hungry.

But the most impressive sight was reserved till later, when in a corner of the camp we found a large number taking part in a Sunday morning religious service amidst the trees.

Drawn up in long lines, these splendid men, to whom their religion is a very living faith, were facing a tall priest in purple head-dress and long flowing robes, who was intoning the liturgy of the Orthodox Church. The full-throated response in those wonderful deep bass voices brought to my mind memories of the gorgeous singing in Petrograd and Moscow.

The faint fragrance of the incense from the swinging censers and the whole strange effect burnt in the feeling that here was a very piece of Russia on the soil of France, a graphic evidence of an *entente* cemented for all ages.

After watching this moving service for some time, we got into the cars and began to crawl along a perfectly straight road through entirely open country. On our left was a tightly-stretched canvas screen, a few hundred yards beyond which were the German front line trenches, most aggressively visible from the road.

To pass some of the time away, I reminded my New York friend of the little story in *Punch* in which an old lady, seeing her boy off at Victoria, for want of something better to say, ejaculated, "Well, Bill, my lad, I 'opes you gets safely back to the trenches." It appealed to us afresh, but from quite a new and personal view-point.

As was probably the case with "Bill," we eventually reached our trench in safety, and then commenced a lengthy personally conducted tour, for, proud as the Colonel had been of his dug-out, that pride was as nothing when compared to that which he felt in his trenches. He saw to it that we missed nothing.

How far we really walked I do not know, but we calculated the distance was some five or six miles, which, in the grilling noon-day sun, was exercise enough.

These trenches were very white, very dry, and very deep; well built, the sides were lined with

wire and the bottom with wood so as to insure some comfort in wet weather.

They twisted and curled in the orthodox way and exhibited many clever devices for stopping the enemy should he ever succeed in forcing an entrance; there were—however, Mr. Boche must find out these little secrets for himself, if he can.

As at Verdun, there was a touch of nature about these trenches which struck me even before I tried to comprehend their military points, for never did the Great Eastern Railway in its most attractive poster offer a brighter picture of "Poppyland" than that which lighted up these dusty lines. Flowers of many kinds abounded, but the poppy was over all, crowding the edges and bursting through the wire reinforcements.

To my surprise, I also noticed innumerable little birds, so rare in many parts of France, which, unmindful of the Hun and all his horrors, were flitting about in every direction.

The first two sentries we came across proved to be Koreans, and very formidable customers they looked, in their flat steel helmets. They also caused us to reflect on the mighty stretches from which Holy Russia can choose her men.

Just think of it, Korea to the Caucasus, and all in a ring fence!

More than one of the Staff informed us that at first the Russian soldier intensely disliked trench warfare, much preferring to get at his enemy on open ground and get at him quickly. However, he is beginning to realise that a scrap in the open is not always practicable, and has become a trench soldier of the very first class, when occasion requires it.

Through various loopholes we made frequent inspections of the adjacent German lines, which varied from near to very near, particularly at one point where only a little river intervened. But look as hard as we could, it was of course impossible to detect the trace of a single Hun.

That they were there we discovered soon after, on leaving the trenches for a few brief moments, for although it appeared to be the unwritten rule that no firing should take place in the middle of the day, one odd sniper, unaffected by rules, was in working order, and we retired once more, without wasting time, to the security below.

In an unfrequented corner, behind a grassy bank, we came across a solitary grave, with a torn and faded cap upon the cross. Here was the last resting-place of some brave lad, after whose name followed the simple, moving words, "*Enfant de France, Mort pour la Patrie.*" And what man could wish for a greater epitaph ?

Our very interesting personally conducted tour came to an end at last, and having said good-bye to the gallant Colonel and his Staff, we proceeded to make our way back, closely following our escort. That the following must be close was soon brought home to us, for trenches have a most uncomfortable way of suddenly subdividing into various branches, thereby leaving the ignorant extremely hazy as to which is the right route toward "Home."

And there was every excuse for occasional loitering, for aeroplanes, constantly manœuvring overhead, were endeavouring to avoid the attentions of the anti-aircraft.

Even without the attendant excitement, there is something very fascinating to most people about the drone of a petrol-engine up aloft, but this fascination changes to intensest interest when snow-white rings are bursting in the blue all around the moving plane.

And so a little lingering soon inculcated the doctrine of once lost, twice take no more chances.

At length, after a long and dusty walk, we came out into a little wood where a group of French soldiers put us on the way to St. X., a distance of about a kilometre along the hard—and glaringly white—high-road. A long canvas screen on our left cut us off from the dead level land which,

scarred with trenches old and new, led to the German lines, some two or three miles away.

For some little time I stood and watched the operations of a French battery which was firing in a desultory way across the open plain, and noticed with interest the unmistakable trouble caused by the falling shells as they dived into the target.

A very well developed kilometre was completed before we reached St. X., or, to be quite accurate, all that was left of it, for the unhappy little town had gone through the worst kind of punishment, and the brilliant sunshine seemed but to accentuate the details of systematic wreckage.

Right across the town we walked, making our way towards the headquarters of General L., with whom we were to lunch.

There was nothing of luxury about the General's quarters, which consisted of the simplest form of bungalow. In front was a little garden, with a good crop of vegetables, surrounded by a flaming border of nasturtiums, a happy mingling of utility with the picturesque.

Following our French friends we went inside, receiving the kindliest of welcomes from a tall, handsome soldier, who possessed a charming air of old-world courtesy.

We were very soon seated at a long deal table

enjoying a most excellent lunch. In the middle of this table was the one and only decoration the bungalow contained, a bunch of nasturtiums in the case of a seventy-five.

Among my neighbours I was delighted to meet a brother of our kind and courteous friend at the French Foreign Office who had been so largely responsible for the arrangement of our visit.

Captain P., an avocat in normal days, proved to be a most entertaining companion, and expressed a keen desire to pay a visit to London at the end of the war. A close student of our laws, he had great admiration for the method of their working, and hoped one day to see the machinery in motion.

Another member of the Staff was interested in London, but for quite another reason. When he heard that I was shortly returning to the great city, he told me of a certain fair Belgian refugee to whom he was engaged, who was living with English friends until better days should dawn.

Needless to say, I lost no time in acceding to the request to transmit to her on my return the latest news of his welfare.

RHEIMS

RHEIMS

THAT afternoon our destination was Rheims, but as the direct route kept disappearing into the enemy's lines, we were forced from time to time to follow varied by-ways. This somewhat winding course led us for many miles through a region of wonderfully kept vineyards, which, from the hasty glance obtainable from a car, looked as if they would yield a splendid crop of grapes.

We spent some time looking at an old pilgrimage church, a delicious little masterpiece, happily untouched by German shells, though the neighbouring village had been somewhat roughly handled.

In accordance with the almost universal rule that every Frenchman of every rank is an artist, we learnt something of the history and details of this beautiful church, not only from Captain B.-L., but from each of our soldier chauffeurs, who agreed in finding it "*ravissante*." I could not help contrasting their enthusiasm with the difficulty I once had of getting a chauffeur of my own to look inside the noble church of St. Etienne at Caen.

He was a good fellow, but art was not his strong suit, and no expression of approval fell from his lips; for on his way out, grumbling somewhat to himself, he was overheard to remark that I had made him walk round that clammy place the year before!

We got our first distant view of Rheims from the top of a steep hill above the village of Berzy, when we saw in the distance the mighty outline of the great cathedral standing apparently as in former days. Far below to the east stretched a great wide plain, intersected in all directions by miles of trenches, through the midst of which ran the little river Vesle.

On arriving at the suburbs of the city, Captain B.-L. disappeared for a moment to report our arrival, returning with another officer who very kindly had accepted the task of taking us in hand. Strangely quiet and forsaken the city appeared, although the south-western section, through which we had come in, did not appear to have been so badly damaged as I had expected to find it; but the mark of the Hun, ever increasing in intensity, reached its acme of frightfulness in that famous little square where Joan of Arc still upholds the banner of France.

It is a scene of the most wanton and useless destruction which to-day surrounds the Maid.

The great archiepiscopal palace, where in former days French Kings were entertained, is now little more than a pile of débris.

In a humbler walk of life the Lion d'Or (starred in the guide-book for no mean cuisine and cellar), recalling many a pleasant stay in by-gone days, has, like its nobler neighbours, suffered severely; but the sturdy Frenchman in charge has stuck to his post, and though his building be patched and battered, he insists on "carrying on."

Towering over all still stands the glorious pile of Nôtre Dame, almost without a peer among those treasures which the genius of the Middle Ages handed down.

I have said that, viewed from a distance, the great cathedral appeared to have been almost untouched, but an inspection at close quarters revealed the terrible extent of the destruction wrought.

The superb western façade can never be the same again, though skilled hands may do their utmost to repair the reckless damage. Thousands of sand-bags are now piled round that western front to mitigate as far as possible any further devastation.

Captain X., having unlocked one of the massive doors, took us in, and for a full hour we wandered round the great shrine, now deserted save for the

flocks of pigeons which had found their way through rents in the stone and the shattered windows.

It is difficult to realise the desolation and utter emptiness of that great interior to-day, after its martyrdom by fire and steel.

Gone are its pictures, its tapestries, and most of its priceless glass, the huge rose-window, one of the finest in the world, holds together just a few fragments of gorgeous coloured glass. Through the remainder of the spaces the dust and the rain may enter as they please.

The great organ is no more, though the pipes still make a brave effort, showing no signs of fire or tarnish. The upper roof has long since gone, and through the lower roof the last shell crashed about a fortnight before our visit, leaving a gaping hole above, and in the south transept a pile of dust and stone, amidst which can be seen traces of richly coloured frescoes.

At regular intervals during our visit shells flew screaming overhead, falling in one section or another of the city, each with a violent explosion. According to Captain X. a particularly vigorous "strafe" was taking place that day, following a fairly long period of comparative calm.

When we somewhat reluctantly left the cathedral, we had hoped to put in a little more time

wandering round the exterior, as well as exploring other sections of the city, but the bombardment continued to increase in severity, and, after a brief survey, our escort was somewhat insistent that we should move along.

Before getting into the car, I walked across to the old Lion d'Or, the interior of which still possessed its familiar look, save in the shrunken size of its clientèle, and—having wished mine host the best of luck—rejoined my friends in the Place du Parvis.

As we drove away through the town about all we saw in the streets were several specimens of that ubiquitous wonder, the small boy, and one most noticeable young lady who, attired in what seemed to my untutored eye, to be the latest fashion, demurely paced the side-walk—under shell-fire.

* * * * *

Our way lay to Epernay, and for the first two or three miles we lost no time in slipping along the broad high-road until we reached a region where safe and normal travelling was the usual thing. Then we leisurely wound our way up the slopes of the Montaigne de Reims, from the highest point of which a wonderful view was obtainable.

With plenty of time to spare, we settled down for a full half-hour, enjoying this fine panorama.

Far away to the East and North we could see the German lines, before which, in a hollow, lay the great city, some four or six miles from us.

Between our hill and Rheims, across a stretch of fair and smiling land, were dotted a number of peaceful-looking farms, where the quiet life of normal times still seemed to prevail.

It was a perfect evening, more fitting far for peace than war, but it was, alas, a scene of very broken peace we looked upon. Almost every minute the low deep boom from a heavy gun rolled across the country-side, and before the sound had reached us a great cloud of smoke and dust proclaimed that yet another German shell had fallen upon that long-suffering city.

Many a visit have I had to Rheims' old Gothic pile, more noble to-day than ever in her history; may it be my great good fortune to return again to Nôtre Dame in the coming days of victory, and there to take part in a Service of Thanksgiving with the valiant soldiers of heroic France!

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